

SQUATTING in



WEST BERLIN

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Above: the streets of Kreuzberg on Saturday afternoon, 18 June 1963

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INTRODUCTION

SQUATTING IN WEST GERMANY is illegal and when it does occur it is more often than not seen by the authorities as a direct attack on the institutions of the state, unlike in England where it is mainly seen as a tolerable nuisance which can be dealt with adequately by the civil law. This was particularly true of the large squatting movement which existed in West Berlin between 1980 and 1984.

Because of this it was a very different kind of squatting from the kind we have here. It was a political movement orientated around squatting and it was conscious of being so. Very few of the people involved squatted because there was literally no alternative to doing so though it did of course mean an improvement in housing and social conditions for the people who did. Opening up a house was a political decision—in theory the police could evict you whenever they felt like it and in practice they often did—so you had to be fairly well organised to pull it off, which of course meant being politically aware. Under the circumstances this meant that it was done openly and as a challenge to the system. Banners declaring that they were BESETZT (squatted) and supporting other causes hung from nearly all the houses and massive demonstrations and militant actions were part and parcel of the movement.

Another factor which made it different from English squatting was the actual size of the houses. Most of them were four storey apartment blocks built about a hundred years ago and most of them had anything from one to three adjoining houses behind the main front house. There was no question of an individual or two occupying a semi-detached and living there undisturbed until the inevitable court order dropped through the letter box, more or less unobserved and not particularly aware of the political consequences of their actions. These large houses also required large groups of people and life in them was usually marked by an endless round of meetings about what to do with this or that or on how to react to the latest police action. Everything about it was obviously political and even if by chance someone got involved without being aware of this, the illusion was soon shattered simply by picking up a newspaper or listening to the radio (there weren't many television sets in the houses) or more

brutally by an early morning raid by the police who, if they did not arrest you or wreck the place, at the very minimum left with your name and snapshot for their files.

This book is an attempt to document this movement and life in the houses from the point of view of some of the people who were involved. Most of it was written at the time of the events described or very shortly afterwards, when the events were still fresh in people's memories. Nearly all of the texts have already been published in some form or another. The History down the side of most of the pages was first published by Ekomedia in photocopy form when they had an office in the Kukuck. This I wrote at two different periods and that is the main reason why it is divided into two. Looking back on it I find it a bit, to say the least, sensational but the facts are accurate. About the words *troop carriers*: if I was writing today I would probably use the words *police transits* but that it is what we called them at the time. With this text as well as with the others I have edited as little as possible, doing so only where something would be really incomprehensible to a non-German reader.

Other sources used are *Bär Fax*, an English language magazine which appeared in Berlin in 1981/2; *Courage*, a German feminist magazine; *Die Tageszeitung*, a left/alternative/greenish daily paper, the likes of which does not exist in England, and which covered the movement extensively; *Frauenbewegung und Häuserkampf—unversöhnlich?* (*Women's Struggle and Squatting Movement—irreconcilable*), a booklet by the women who ran the women's café in the Jagowstraße. The photos, except where credited, I took myself mainly in 1983

This book would never have appeared without the help of numerous people. I would like to thank them all, especially the contributors; and Jo Brown without whose help I would never have been able to print the photos; Martin, Sarah, Kay and Papier Tiger in Berlin who sent me essential material; Mike and Richard at Leveller Graphics who allowed me to use their excellent typesetting and graphics facilities and who gave me invaluable advice; Jo Brew for proof reading it and, last but not least, Hooligan Press for publishing it.

I would like to dedicate this book to Claus Jürgen Rattay, who died as the result of arrogance and power-tripping of West Berlin Innensenator Heinrich Lummer and the brutality of the West Berlin police. Claus died in September 1981 as a result of a police baton charge which a West Berlin court has since declared to have been unnecessary and illegal.

Frank Jackson
Brixton, March 1987



Squatter demo, spring 1983

a **SHORT HISTORY** of the **BERLIN SQUATTING MOVEMENT**

DECEMBER 1980—JULY 1982

WEST BERLIN has a history of radical protest. The squatting movement is its latest manifestation. It is a history that in the post-war period goes back to the APO (extra parliamentary opposition) of the late '60s and the 'Long March through the Institutions'. The APO was mainly a student movement and intellectual, Marxist and ideological, though just as capable of fighting on the barricades as today's squatters and their supporters. When they were beaten off the streets the protest became terrorist—the Second of July Movement and the RAF, which ended when Andreas Baader and Ulrike Meinhof 'committed suicide' in the top security prison of Stammheim. The anti-nuclear movement of recent years also has a strong West Berlin connection.

West Berlin, in this respect as in many others, is very a untypical West German city. Its geographical position makes it ultra politically sensitive. The propaganda war between East and West is at its most intense here. Turning on the television you know within minutes which side you are tuned into. Politics, not the weather, is the most common subject of conversation. But, ironically, the reason the city has become known as a city of protest rather than a city of conservative anti-communism is probably because of its four power status. No German army is allowed here, and thus there is no compulsory military service. This law is also valid for West Germans who come and live here—which they do in their thousands. There are also two large universities here and

Berlin is still the cultural capital of Germany.

SQUATTING A HOUSE A DAY

The housing problem in the city had been simmering for years but at the end of 1980 it became public. A building contractor had fraudulently obtained 120,000,000 DM of public funds, had invested some of it in a construction project in Saudi Arabia, and taken up residence in the Bahamas. The ruling Lord Mayor was forced to resign, partly due to the publicity given to the scandal by the main daily, *Die Berliner Zeitung* (BZ). This paper, owned by the Springer Concern, who control 50% of all

newspapers and magazines published in West Germany and 80% of those published in West Berlin, was anxious to put an end to the Social Democratic-Liberal alliance which had controlled the city government since the war. An interim Lord Mayor, Vogel, another Social Democrat, was appointed to run the city government until new elections could be held.

Using this breathing space, various groups and organisations who had been involved in the housing problem for years began to squat empty houses in an attempt to publicise the housing scandal—600 empty houses (10,000 apartments) and large scale speculation. But before anyone knew what was happening squatting acquired a momentum of its own; other groups who were looking for a

INTERVIEW WITH A SQUATTER

HOW LONG HAVE YOU been involved in the *Besetzer* (squatter) scene and how did you get involved?

I became involved about November last year and I've been in this house since the end of January. When I moved back here to Kreuzberg in October I started working in the *Mieterladen* (tenants' advice centre) on Chamsisplatz. A lot of things were happening at the time in the area, and the more one got involved in them the more one got involved in the squatting.

The *Mieterladen*—could you tell me about what you do there?

I have been involved in various projects and activities that have started from the *Mieterladen*. For instance, we catalogued the numbers of empty flats in the area. It had never been done before. And that escalated into another action which was organised by the *Berliner Mieter Verein* (Berlin Tenants Union). The idea was to get something started for the under-privileged groups here, the foreigners, single women with children, and other people which were disadvantaged in various ways.

The foreigners were in a situation where they could do very little for themselves because of the *Ausländergesetz* (laws for foreigners). A lot of them had been living for a long time in squalid and terrible conditions. At the time we thought it was possible to get something done for these people. We collected lots of data and information and had discussions with the Senate, but despite the lot of hard work we put into it and the press coverage, it was a total failure.

We got together figures of about 10,000 empty flats in the city, and we tried to put legal pressure on the Senate to rent these flats. We got a lot of verbal concessions in the beginning and we thought we had gained something but nothing really positive was achieved by it.

Can you tell me something about the history of squatting in Berlin?

The movement has its roots in the student revolt of '68, goes on through the *Blues* and the *Deutschen Herbst* of '78. It's a part of the left scene in the city. Places have been squatted for at least five years.

In '79 things really began to get started in the worst slum clearance areas in the east of Kreuzberg—in SO36. More and more houses began to be occupied and just before Christmas 1980 the police cleared out several houses. Then there was the reaction against this—the so-called violence.

The housing problem only came to be publicly discussed after the first stones were thrown. Why?

Yes, the publicity did come with the first riots. I know that people in the *Mieterladen* have been working on the problem for nearly five years and the results have been practically negligible. They haven't achieved very much, and they put a lot of hard work into trying to tackle these problems. It escalated with the press coverage, and because of the potential of the

movement—which wasn't purely concerned with housing problems but also with *andere Lebensformen* (other ways of living). The people were not just squatting houses, they were actually doing something with them.

Could you describe some of the sorts of people involved in the movement?

I can tell you about the people around Chamsisplatz. About nineteen houses here are squatted. A lot of them are students, and there's a fair sprinkling of unemployed and younger people. There are also a few older people who have been politically active for a long time. There is also the so-called militant fringe or *Front Kids*, who are to some extent a bit disorientated. My experience with the Punks for instance: they are in some ways very naive, which is disconcerting at times, but behind the facade and the language I have found them to be really nice people. To sum up, I would say that most of them are young, intellectual and politically aware.



You are living in a house which is partially squatted. Could you tell me about that?

We squatted the three empty flats in the front of the house. Later on we opened up the empty flats in the back. There are still tenants living in the house, and for us that can be an advantage and a disadvantage. The tenants have a different attitude to squatting, property and rent; and perhaps that keeps our feet on the ground in some respects. The disadvantage is that it is difficult to do things in the house. In the houses which are completely squatted the people tend to look on the house as their own, and they have put a lot of work into changing the interiors and renovating them. They can have things like communal workshops. But we are fairly tied in this house.

How have the tenants in the neighbourhood reacted to your moving in here?

The reaction has been fairly mixed. We have found it difficult to overcome their suspicions. But after the first few weeks the tenants were coming by with old carpets and furniture. We organised discussions but at first we didn't have much response. We tried to explain the modernisation plans and how they themselves were affected by it.

Outside, in the immediate neighbourhood, the reaction has been rather cautious. We put tables on the pavement and invited people to coffee and cakes and tried to explain why we were squatting. Sometimes it was really good and we could really talk with them, but they still remained cautious, especially because of the association made between squatting and violence... but much of the violence comes from the way in which some of the people around here live. As an example, one night a 'neighbour' from across the road shot up the whole of the front of the house with his air rifle and smashed all the windows.

free living space under their own control had joined in. Overnight empty houses were being squatted at the rate of one a day.

Most of the houses were in Kreuzberg, in the American Sector. This is the city's poorest area and it is where most of the Turkish migrant worker families live.

The authorities had been caught off guard. The police reacted with dawn searches of the houses, during which some of the houses were vandalised. Refusing to be intimidated by this the squatters and their supporters reacted by going out on the streets after every search and smashing the windows of banks, insurance companies and supermarkets. The police, at this time inexperienced in street fighting, were unable to stop them. However, they did baton charge one big demonstration on the *Kürfürstendamm*, the city's main street. The effect of this display of police brutality was to turn many peaceful demonstrators into potential rioters.

For a time the searches became daily, followed at night by the 'counter violence' of the squatters. The Social Democrats wanted a quiet city for the elections, so eventually the searches were more or less stopped.

Another factor was at work too. A new political party, the *Alternative Liste*, a broad coalition of ecologists, feminists, socialists, citizen action groups, anarchists, radicals, gays, Turkish groups etc was contesting the elections. Among their demands were a neutral Germany, free of nuclear weapons and nuclear power (East and West), a thirty-hour week, free public transport, the vote for the migrant worker community, and an amnesty for the demonstrators who had been arrested. And they said they would be active in the streets as well as in the Senate.

All three establishment parties were united in their opposition to this new 'undemocratic' party. But the Social Democrats had most to lose. There was a very real possibility that it would lose a lot of its leftist voters to it. The Social Democrats' reaction to this was to promise to reform their housing policy and say they were prepared to negotiate with the squatters.

The squatters, who refused to negotiate while some of their people were still in jail, maintained that this was a cheap electioneering ploy. They still had a substantial amount of public support at this time, despite being branded as *Chaoten* and *Radikalins* in the Springer Press.

Reacting to this press campaign, the Social Democrats tried also to promote their image as a 'law and order' party, so at the end of March, without warning, they ordered the eviction of three houses. The demonstration that evening ended in a police baton charge and there were riots into the early hours of the following morning, during which over a hundred people were injured. And two weeks later the entire *Besetzerrat* (Squatters Council), meeting in a house in Kreuzberg, was arrested and charged with the conspiracy section of the 'anti-terrorist laws'.

Yet, despite all this squatting remained for most West Berliners a media event. But on April 12 Sigmund Depus, an ex-RAF member, died on hunger strike in a West German jail. In Kreuzberg a loudspeaker van toured the streets announcing the news. The reaction was swift and once again caught the police off guard. A thousand people made their way immediately to the Kurfürstendamm and, rushing through the Easter tourist crowds, smashed 80% of the windows on the two mile long monument to consumerism and the post-war rebuilding of the



Squat on Willibaldalexis Straße

city. When the police arrived in force a half an hour later most of the damage was already done and there was nobody around to arrest. From then on the troop carriers and the para-military uniforms of the riot police became part of the sights in the city centre. It was becoming blatantly obvious that a large and militant minority had rejected the West German state and the consumer society.

In May this was confirmed at the polls. The *Alternative Liste* got 9% of the votes, getting 13 seats in the Senate. But the Christian Democrats were the new government, though they had not obtained an overall majority. Elation at the success of the *Alternative Liste* blinded many people at the time to what this could mean in the long run.

How has the Senate reacted?

I am still trying to work out for myself whether it has been a calculated reaction or whether it just resulted from the pressure put on them.

When *Bürgermeister* Vogel took over, he developed the so-called *Berliner Linie*. This involved negotiations with the squatters, but from the start the squatters were not prepared to negotiate while the people who had demonstrated on the streets in their support were still in jail. Nevertheless, discussions did take place through third parties.

It seemed from very early on that the Senate was trying to divide the movement into houses which would negotiate and houses which would not. But looking back at it now, it seems that this was a deliberate tactic to split the movement.

During all this there were searches and evictions—while the negotiations through third parties were going on.

The Senate also had a problem with its own executive—the *Staatsanwaltschaft* (Public Prosecutor's Office)—which wanted to restore order in the houses. This was one of the reasons for the provocative searches. The police wanted to show that they had the upper hand.

The police have searched a lot of houses. What does this mean to the houses being searched?

It means an awful of uncertainty, because nobody knows when the police are going to come. A lot of the houses the police have been to have been vandalised—they've wrecked some of the places they have been into. They come very early in the morning and people are hardly ever prepared for them. The squatters are usually taken to one of the larger police stations for identification and questioning. In most cases they are charged with trespassing, with resisting arrest, and more recently with stealing gas and electricity. And in some cases with Law 129a—*Bildung einer kriminellen Vereinigung*—which is conspiracy. (Law 129a was introduced specifically to suppress the RAF). In a lot of the houses the police have been so rough and so brutal with the people and their possessions that this has caused a lot of anger.

Is there much public support for the squatters?

I think that at the beginning, at Christmas, there was a lot, particularly within the districts themselves. But it has ebbed. There is a basic sympathy but it is difficult to define.

Due to the actual housing shortage practically everyone in this area is effected, especially in this area. People at some time or another have had some sort of trouble with their landlords, or with the rents going up, or with the neglect of the houses, and especially with the problem of actually getting a flat.

But because of the press coverage, the provocation of the police, and the particular form of resistance from the squatters, this sympathy has gradually ebbed.

Do you think the press and television coverage has been fair?

No, I don't think it has. Particularly the Springer press hasn't been, and they have almost a monopoly here. They tried to isolate and criminalise the squatters as *Chaoten* and *Radikale*—at that sort of level. There was no discussion of the problems which were behind the squatting, and no understanding of why people were going out onto the streets and smashing the windows of banks. But nobody was surprised by this reaction, it was the obvious one. I don't know about television—I don't have one.

Now the violence has escalated, and this week it has been almost nightly. Why?

I think the violence has been provoked—by the police and by the *Staatsanwaltschaft*. There is a lot of frustration in the houses and a tremendous amount of anger, particularly directed against the police, because of the searches and evictions. We decided we must always react to these attacks by the police, we can't just let

them happen, because if we do, next week they come knocking on this door and we will be out on the street.

There must always be a political reaction, and most of the reactions have been directed into this 'counter-violence'. I call it 'counter-violence' because the original violence comes from the police themselves. It has escalated particularly in the last week because of the eviction of Mittenwalderstraße. It comes from the daily provocation and intimidation.

Another factor, I think too, is the uncertainty about the future. In the long run the CDU (Christian Democrats) may try and clear out all of the houses and if there is no pressure on them, they will be able to do that.

Is there anything which would stop this 'counter-violence'?

Yes, certainly. If the searches were stopped, and as far as I can see there is practically no reason whatsoever for them. If the clearing out of the houses was stopped immediately and if everyone knew this. If a political solution to the whole problem was being openly discussed with us, it would certainly stop.

People don't go out onto the street and risk long prison sentences for fun—they do it to defend what they have achieved over the last six months.

Bürgermeister von Weizäcker said today, after yesterday's riots in front of Rathaus Schöneberg (the Senate), that the non-violent houses must separate themselves from the violent ones. What is your reaction to that?

Scheiße! (Shit!)

This is well known tactic, divide and rule, and it's been known to us from the start. I don't think one can separate the so-called violent houses from the so-called peaceful houses, even if one tried. I don't think people are going to fall into this trap.



Graffiti on the Berlin Wall

What do you think will happen, this summer and in the long run?

I feel that in some way the Senate will use this political leeway they have at the moment. They have a certain amount of sympathy because the SPD left them with a great problem and they have got to solve it, and in summer a lot of the young people are away, so they might use this period in getting as far as they can in clearing out as many of the houses as possible. That's certainly on the cards.

In fact, from here the future looks pretty black, but we have not given up hope. And if it comes to a mass clear-out of the houses, there will be a mass reaction. The Senate knows that, von Weizäcker knows that. But if he takes this easy line, it will be no solution to the problem. The people will still be there, the problem will still be there.

Is there anything you think I haven't covered?

Yes, the imagination and the work that goes on in the houses. Squatting is not just sitting on your backside and doing nothing. There is fantastic potential in the houses, and given a certain amount of freedom within the environment it could really grow. It would really hurt me to see that destroyed by this mindless *draufschlagen* (hammering/destroying), by this clearing-out of the houses.

In many ways the houses are like small plants, in the right conditions they will start to grow and a lot will come out of them, but if you start tearing up the earth and withholding water, you destroy them. In the houses a lot of people are trying to be creative and sensitive towards their environment, but when there is continuous violence from the outside, there must be some reaction to it, they become nervous and edgy, and maybe in the long run very resigned.

The recent evictions in Mittenwald Straße are a clear example to us that despite the promises nothing has changed in the *Sanierungspolitik* (rebuilding and renovation policy)—luxury flats and huge profits are more important to them than peoples' needs. But we

have also learnt that *wer sich nicht wehrt, lebt verkehrt* (anyone who doesn't defend themselves is living the wrong way).

There's life in the houses now, the court yards have been painted, gardens have been laid—and you can hear the laughter of the kids who come into play. That's the kind of thing I'd like to emphasise.

Thank you!

From Bär Fax August 1981
Interview by Frank Jackson



AND ONE WITH NO ANSWERS

AS PART OF OUR FEATURE on squatting we had reserved space for an interview with the Berlin Police. However, our numerous attempts to get this interview were unsuccessful.

The first attempt was made in June by our reporter Frank Jackson. He contacted the press officer Herr Schulz by phone and later on the same day he delivered a letter personally to the *Polizei Presidium* to confirm the request. No reply was received.

I made the next attempt two weeks later. I telephoned but was informed that Herr Schultz was not in and that I should ring back at half past four. I did so but was told that he had gone out again and was asked to ring back the following Monday at nine. I left him a message informing him that it was essential that the interview take place on the following Wednesday at the latest, if it was to be ready in time for the magazine to go to the printers.

When I rang on Monday, Herr Schulz was absent again, but I was informed that he would not have any time to give an interview on the following day or on Wednesday. I tried again on the following day but was still unable to contact him. However, on the Thursday I did manage to speak to him.

His first inquiry was had the magazine been registered and on what subject did we wish to interview him. I replied that the magazine was a new publication and that it was in the process of being registered in Frankfurt, and that the subject of the interview was squatting. He said that he was not competent to answer questions on the subject and suggested that I apply to another institution.

He also wished to know what kind of a political magazine *Bär Fax* was. I replied that the magazine was not a political magazine and that since we already had an interview with somebody living in an occupied house, we wanted to have an interview with the police to get the other side of the story. I also said that since I had questions on the riots and demonstrations I was sure that I had the right institution. He said that he was not the other side of the story, but that if there was to be an interview he would have to see some of the questions in advance. I said that I did not have the sheet of questions with me and he then said that he had no time the next day, but that I should ring back next Monday and have the questions ready, and that then we could discuss it again.

So, Herr Schulz, here are the questions:

How do the police see their role/position with regard to the squatting situation?

Do the police feel that they are being used to solve a problem which should properly be dealt with by the Senate?

Why are the occupied houses being searched?

The squatters claim that the police have been brutal and destructive during the searches?

In June plain clothes police involved in a search wore masks. Who authorised this and why?

In the media the figures for injured policemen are always higher than the figures for injured demonstrators. But the police are well armed, well protected and well organised?

At the moment the police are using wooden batons instead of rubber ones, yet wooden batons are a lot more dangerous and can cause permanent head injuries?

I have been told by squatters that telephones in occupied houses are being tapped. Is this true?

Several of the people arrested during the demonstrations have been acquitted by the courts, despite the fact that there were several police witnesses. Does this indicate a lack of confidence by the judiciary in the testimonies of the police?

Once again people are talking about a 'Revolve der Jugend' (youth revolt). Many police men are very young, especially those at the demonstrations. How does this 'Revolve' influence them?

Thank you, Herr Schultz!

From Bär Fax, August 1981
Interview by Udo Renkes



THE SUMMER OF 1981

By June 160 houses had been squatted. The *Alternative Liste* organised a demonstration calling for an end to evictions and searches and to demand an amnesty for all those arrested in the street fighting. The demonstration was timed to coincide with a debate on the matter in the Senate.

50,000 people turned up. Three quarters of an hour later, as the demonstration was approaching Rathaus Schöneberg, where the debate was taking place, the first rounds of tear gas were shot into the crowd and the first stones began to fly. About a thousand demonstrators broke through the police barricades and there was a several hour long pitched battle outside the Rathaus itself. Millions of West German television viewers were treated to full coverage of the spectacle that night. Fighting spread to other parts of the city, mainly to Kreuzberg, the squatters' stronghold. It was only the next morning, when the clouds of tear gas had dispersed and the streets were being cleared of the remains of the barricades, that the police could say they were in control of the streets again.

Now the situation was obvious; any new evictions would lead to fierce street fighting, hundreds of injured, millions of DM worth of damage, and even possibly deaths on both sides.

The next two months were relatively quiet. The Senate was in recess and the squatters, with the pressure off them for the moment, were busy renovating their houses, many of which were near ruins after years of being empty. They also began to canvas support for their cause among the general public. Faced with the hostile propaganda machine of the Springer press this was an almost impossible task.

(When it was alleged that they were getting financial support from Moscow, a group of squatters actually went to the Soviet Consulate to demand it, only to discover that no badly needed roubles were available.)

There was a great mood of optimism in the air. Islands had been created where people could begin to exercise autonomy over their own lives and attempt to end the isolation and alienation which industrial consumer society was imposing on them. Symbolic of were the *Durchbrüche* (break throughs), the joining up of several previously separate apartments.

FIVE HOUSES



Hexenhaus (Witch House) Leignitzer Straße
Hexenhaus was squatted on January 5 by twelve women from the autonomous women's and Lesbian movement.

"Squatting is our answer to our own housing needs and to the inhuman housing policies of the Senate and housing companies. After the so-called 'riots' in December we decided to stop sitting passively on the sidelines. Up until then we had limited ourselves to legal means of finding a place in which to live differently, which meant ending up alone or with one other person in a cold, dark, one-roomed, ground floor apartment with a luxurious outside toilet. Women don't get nice big apartments.

"This house belongs to BETA, which is typical of the kind of housing company which makes profits with public money. No apartments here have been rented out since 1977, and many of the tenants left because they were given confusing information about what was going to happen to the house. When a house is empty the company can apply for grants to renovate it or even demolish it. The law says that tenants have a right to participate in decisions of this kind, which is the reason why the companies are trying to empty the houses.

"We are supported by women's projects. They hold meetings here and help with the night watches. Other women help with renovation or give donations towards it. Women architects have advised us, and women photographers are documenting the present condition of the house and the changes we are making. The Feminist Women's Health Centre want to move into the shop on the ground floor. The other empty apartments are being shared out among the tenants who are still here, ourselves and with women from the women's refuge.

"The side wing is going to be used communally and have a communal kitchen, with the dark ground floor apartments being turned into workshops. No men are allowed in the side wing—that's the wish of the Lesbians.

"We are permanently confronted with the problem of to what extent women and leftists, Lesbians and leftists can work together. On the one hand we don't simply want to react to an agenda set by the Left, but on the other hand we have to do just that because we are as much concerned and affected by the same things that affect the Left. We want to develop something of our own, but don't have much time for that. At the moment a Women's Strategy Group is meeting regularly. Maybe this will develop into a *Besetzerinnenrat* (women's squatter council)."

Naunynstraße 58

"We are a fairly varied collection of ten women—all living here permanently. Despite differences in age, experiences, sexual orientations, political ideals and ideas of how we want to live, we know that we want to live with other women.

"The house belongs to APH. They want to modernise it and increase the rents. We want to stop this kind of modernisation. Last September, the *Internationale Bauausstellung* (International Building Exhibition) refused

ed them a grant to modernise the house on the grounds that it was in too good a condition. This year the *Bezirksamt* (local council) has no more money available. But despite this the APH started emptying the house at lightning speed last November. There are only three tenants left now and they intend to move out soon.

"That it was necessary to take control of the house is shown clearly by the fact that in February, two days before we squatted the place, building workers were sent to smash up the heating ovens, the toilets and the windows in the empty apartments. To repair all this, especially the ovens, we need donations of money, materials, tools and help.

"Here are some extracts from our house diary:
● 'We'd like to celebrate our first week here with lots of bottles of *Sekt*. But we probably won't because we have no time. Time is central problem for most of us.

● 'Hardly slept. This morning M and I were shit scared for the first time. A lorry drove by and we thought it might be building workers. We were lying cuddling on the sofa, contemplating our unbarricaded windows, too lazy to get up. What is going to happen to us here? Something must be done about the windows... Read a disgusting article in the newspaper—the police used their batons to stop people squatting a house—one person injured, two arrested. Why can't they leave us in peace, leave us live the way we want? Shit!

● 'Prison as a deterrence and threat has become a lot closer since the open confrontation with the police began in December.'

"One thing is clear to us: we are not going to keep quiet when we know that people with whom we share common ideas are being arrested again and again, and being held in inhuman conditions. We are lot more conscious now of the limits of legality than we were earlier."

Winterfeldstraße 37

On Saturday March 5, at eleven o'clock, as the bells of the church on the square began to ring, the first banner was hung from the windows of Winterfeldstraße 37. It read:

SANFTMUT TUT NICHT LANGE GUT
NEHMT EUCH IN 8 VOR FRAUENWUT!

(We are fed up of being nice, beware of women's anger! An approximate translation!) Only on this particular morning there wasn't much trace of women's anger. The atmosphere was more one of joy—joy at the successful squatting of the house and at the prospect of living in a house in which mainly women lived.

The five apartments squatted had been empty for more than six months. They were ready to move into—all they needed really was a coat of paint. There were even baths. The owners had no plans for them and a few days later told the tenants that they had no intention of doing necessary repairs on the side wing. It was obvious that they intended to demolish the place.

Some of the women who have lived in the house for years want to campaign, with the squatters, to save it and eventually turn it into a meeting place for the area.



Police removing a barricade of flower pots erected by some Greens

Jagowstraße 12

"The women's café group has been in existence for a year. We are all either students or are going school, and between 23 and 25 years of age. As more and more houses began to be squatted we joined a mixed squatting group, because we didn't want to live in isolation from others and our main aim was to open up a women's cafe here in Moabit. We had lots of reservations . . . about whether we would find enough women to work with us, about renovating the place. And typically, we underestimated ourselves once again.

"We want to work in the café in our free time. We want it to be a space for activities with an atmosphere that will attract women. The café will also be a place where women will be able to exhibit their paintings. Some of us also write, so we want to have readings—not by famous people but by ourselves and other women. We also want to show films here, make pottery and have a darkroom, and to install a lathe in the cellar.

"We moved in at the beginning of February. The police came immediately and wanted to evict us. But in the middle of their brutal action they suddenly stopped, so we moved back in.

"Maringer & Co own the place. They have applied for permission to knock the place down, but because the building is structurally sound they didn't get it. Now they are appealing against this and at the same time slowly emptying the place of tenants. There are still four tenants in the front house and a few in the back house as well. They have removed the guttering from the back house and so the facade is slowly deteriorating, and the side of the house is getting damp. They have torn out some of the installations and refuse to repair a broken water main. Lots of the ovens and windows are also broken.

"There's a law which says that it is illegal to leave an apartment empty for more than three months, but upstairs there is one apartment which had its electricity meter last read in 1966. Other apartments have been empty for up to two years.

"In our opinion, what the majority of squatters are saying is that the owners of the house have forfeited their right to make profits from them because they have left the houses to rot and tried to demolish them. For that reason we are demanding that the grants to renovate and do up the houses go directly to the communities in the houses. We do not want rent contracts of the old kind under any circumstances—we want a licence with a rent that covers costs and not a penny more.

"It's a scandal that we should be prosecuted and not

the speculators.

"Discussion with the men in the house goes something like this: they say that if only women are allowed in the café they feel excluded, and ask why can't everyone in the house use the café, that it would be possible to do publicity work through it . . . in principal, they don't accept the project politically.

"The question of how much do we allow ourselves to differ and to what extent do we exercise solidarity with each other is unbelievably difficult. On some points it is very clear, and on these points we will not allow ourselves to give way. Sometimes I feel as if I'm between two lines of men, between the men of the police on one side and with the men of the movement on the other. The confrontations and discussions all take place on a male level.

"Lots of women have difficulties with the militancy and have problems feeling good in the houses.

"I don't want to throw stones, put on a helmet and fight the *Bullen* (cops), but to run around like a little dove of peace, going on about peace, peace, peace . . . I'd feel a fool if I did that.

"If there's to be an eviction it's important that lots of women come here and defend themselves as spectacularly as possible. But it's crazy to try and defeat the police—if they wanted they could drive a tank into the yard here. In a house it's like being in a mouse trap. Lots of people must come, but not with the same weapons the police have—baton's and guns. You'd be condemning yourself to death if you did that—that's the politics of suicide. Such is the reality of our relative strengths.

"We have overcome some of our fears, at least the fear of being prosecuted for *Hausfriedensbruch* (criminal trespass). But the fear of an eviction, of the *Bullen* smashing down our barricades and what comes after that is still there.

"Before they tried to evict us—the time we squatted the house—I was much more afraid. We were all sitting on the stairs. It was an unnerving moment when they smashed down the door. You hear the wood breaking and you don't know what's going to happen next. I would've ran if there hadn't been so many other people there. But in a way the police were also helpless. The commander tried several times to get us to stand up. Until eventually the second-in-command gave the order to move us and they started dragging us out. They didn't carry us, they held our arms behind our backs in such a way that if you left yourself hang passively it would be dislocated. If you defended yourself in any way at all you were immediately arrested. But I learnt a lot from the experience.

A squatters' weekly magazine, *Die Besetzer Post*, was published; it took no advertising and reached a circulation of 5,000. A pirate radio station began broad-



casting from a squatted house in Kreuzberg, and when the police closed it down another one started broadcasting from another house.

Houses had open days on which members of the public were invited to visit and see what was going on for themselves. Several *Kindergärten* and an alternative school was started. Several houses opened up cafés and galleries. A cinema, the *Frontkino*, was started in another house. Music and theatre groups got together, and some groups began painting colourful illegal pictures on some of the ugly grey walls of the city.

TUWAT!

DO SOMETHING!

On August 5 the unofficial truce ended. *Innensenator* Lumer issued an ultimatum to nine of the squatted houses. The squatters were told to leave the houses within two weeks or else the police would evict them.

The squatting movement regarded this as a declaration of war. Their reaction was *TUWAT* (in Berlin dialect: Do something!). This was to be a month long festival of resistance and solidarity starting on August 25. Clandestinely, leaflets inviting people to come to Berlin were printed in German, Dutch, Italian, Spanish, French and English and were taken out of Berlin by sympathisers.

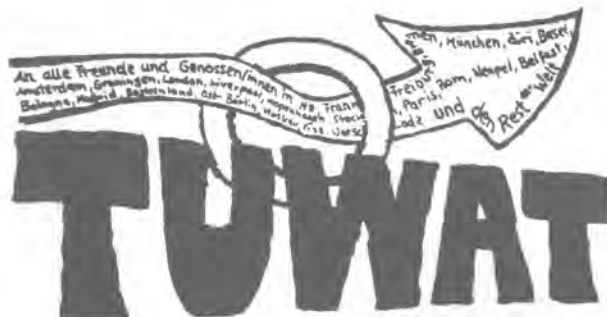
The authorities in turn regarded *TUWAT* as a declaration of war on the legal government of the city. The *TUWAT* offices which had been opened in two of the squatted houses were raided and large quantities of leaflets were confiscated. The Springer press reacted with its usual tirade against all form of dissidence; but, ironically, this only publicised the coming event even more.

Just before *TUWAT* eventually started, the police chose the yearly Chamissoplatz Festival, an event sponsored by the local tenants' organisation, the parish and the local branch of the Social Democrats, to raid the *TUWAT* office in an adjacent street and arrest the two people who were there at the time. A crowd from the Festival which gathered at the local police station to protest against the arrests was dispersed by a baton charge. To deny police access to Chamissoplatz a barricade was built and set on fire, and it was only two hours later, when it had finally burnt out, that the police, shooting massive quantities of teargas, were able to occupy the square.

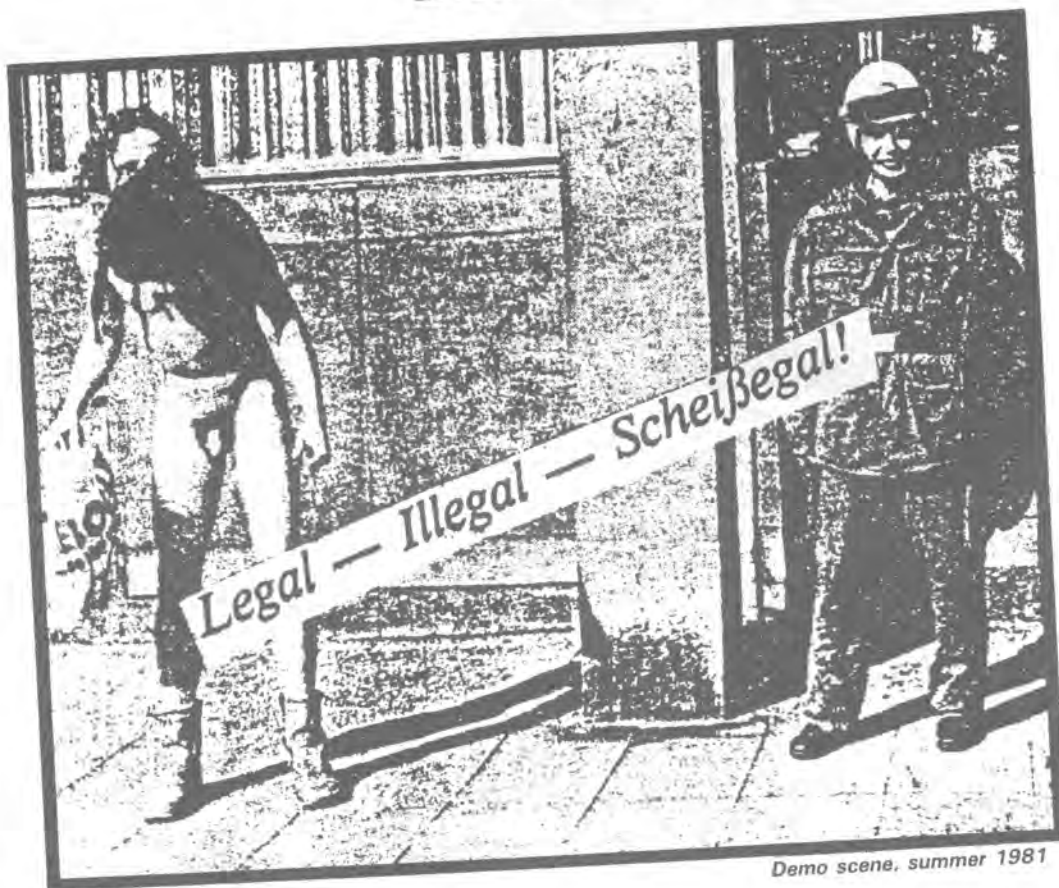
Later, a teargas cannister was shot into a crowded pub adjoining the square, the windows were smashed, and the owner and several customers brutally assaulted. A beautiful summer afternoon which had started off like a church picnic had ended in terror.

TUWAT started. People with rucksacks began arriving from all over Europe. A lot of them came from Amsterdam, another squatting capital. Not as many came as had been expected, but those that did come gave the squatting movement fresh hope and energy.

Daily, for the following



SPEKTAKEL IN BÄRLIN AB 25.8.



Demo scene, summer 1981

Kottbusser Straße 8

After one unsuccessful attempt, this house was eventually successfully squatted by seven Turkish women, a German woman and five children on February 18. As they were moving in a confrontation between them and German building workers who were working on the house broke out.

"We were inside and were trying to put up barricades but they had already broken down the door and had begun swearing at us... they were being sexist, racist and fascistic all at once. The fact that we were women and on top of that Turkish was too much of a provocation for them. One friend of ours was half strangled by a guy who also started beating her with a trowel. Another's hair was pulled so much that she started bleeding. It was really dramatic. The police arrived twenty minutes later. That was an immediate relief." But it didn't stop them arresting two of the squatters, both of whom are still in jail. Later, after difficult negotiations, an executive of GSW, the public company which owns the house, arrived and gave the women the house keys.

The idea to squat the place originated at the Information Centre for Turkish women, an advice centre in Kreuzberg which often has to deal with single women to whom they can offer very little help. Most of these women have certificates entitling them to housing, often to emergency housing, but this can mean a wait of up to four years. And they are often allocated an apartment which a German family has also been allocated and who nearly always get the place.

So lots of families with children are forced to live in damp one-room apartments.

The women of the Information Centre work with the two women's refuges, where over ten Turkish women are looking for apartments, some of them for more than a year.

"We have demanded that the Bezirksamt provide more facilities, such as a house where single German and Turkish women can live. More and more Turkish families are breaking up and the women are being left on their own with lots of children and being constantly harassed and threatened by their ex-husbands. If they could live with other women and not be scattered and isolated over the whole area, they would be unbelievably more secure."

Particularly telling of the attitude of the Senate to the 'social service' provided by the squatters is the fact that two days after they were given the keys, the Housing Office sent two pregnant women around to them. Both had been looking for apartments, six hours a day, for the last half year. "They were told that there might be a place free here. This house is relatively secure. There is a long list of Turkish women who would like to move in. Some of them are often in tears... the Senate is so cynical, the way it sends women to us in order to get out of its obligation to pregnant women, old people, foreigners and handicapped people. Squatting has given us the courage to face such things..."

Interviews by Dora Schemme and Barbara Rosenberg

From *Courage* (April 1981)

weeks, things were happening. There were meetings and discussions in the houses. The Frontkino and several other cinemas showed films on the struggles being waged in Poland, Zurich, South Africa, Amsterdam, El Salvador, Brixton, Belfast etc. Street parties were held in the areas where there were a lot of squatted houses, and streets, barred to the use of cars for the day, were used to dance in. In the Kukuck, a squatted factory turned into a youth centre, there was music, theatre and mime every evening. Sleep-ins were organised on the Kurfürstendamm. Crowds of *Chaoten* went to the exclusive Café Kranzler for coffee and cakes. When the management refused to serve them, they served themselves.

Everyday there was at least

one small demonstration somewhere in the city, but it was the big demonstrations which conveyed the optimism and sense of freedom that were an integral part of *TUWAT*. These were massive affairs, during which the streets became alive with colour and music. They were like mass walking circuses, leaving trails of graffiti behind them. The demonstrators painted their faces, dressed up, some as clowns, others as anarchists in black cloaks and hats carrying the traditional black spherical bombs, and others did not wear any clothes at all, something which freaked the police as much as when they were presented with red roses, the symbol of socialism.

Generally *TUWAT* was peaceful. An exception to this was when a demonstration visited the villas of some of the owners of the squatted houses in the exclusive residential area among the woods and the lakes of the Grünewald. A few windows were smashed, including those of the South African Consulate, and when the police went into action, the residents got their first whiff of teargas.



On the roof of Fidicinstraße 43

Some houses got involved in particular 'social problems'; one house was occupied mainly by people who had been through psychiatric institutions; another by people who had problems with drugs. Wall paintings appeared on the fronts of some of the houses. The back yards of houses were cleaned up and planted and children from neighbouring unsquatted houses would come in and play. One house even got hold of some chickens and goats and started a city farm.

The squatters, living and working communally and, most of all, having a good time, had turned their backs on the consumer society with its alarm clocks and 'work hard, earn money, buy things' ethic. The problems that would later arise in the houses were not yet evident.

THE HAIG DEMONSTRATION

On September 15th Alexander Haig landed at the US military airport and was flown by helicopter to Rathaus Schöneberg, where in a speech before the Senate, he quoted Voltaire: 'Even when we disagree with what you say, we are prepared to defend to the death your right to say it.'

He was referring to the 80,000 people who at that moment were demonstrating against his presence in the city. The *Alternative Liste*, who along with other groups had called the demonstration, had refused to attend the official reception to welcome him. The demonstration, at which both American and Russian flags were burned, was peaceful, despite the provocative action of the police, who, before the demonstration had started, had arrested 150 people and placed them in 'preventive custody'.

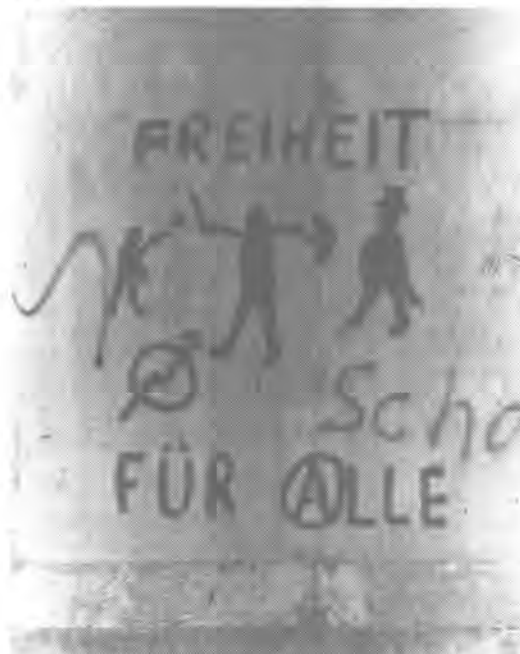
However, trouble broke out at the end, when a part of the crowd tried to continue on towards Rathaus Schöneberg. They made some progress and had the police on the retreat for a while. A few barricades were built, but the police got the upper hand and drove them back with teargas batons and water canon. They eventually cleared the streets by driving their troop carriers through the crowds at high speed.

The Lord Mayor, von Weizsäcker, was very embarrassed, and publically assured Haig that those on the streets were only a small unrepresentative minority and should not give him the impression that the American presence in the city was unwelcome.

A DAY IN THE LIFE

ON SEPTEMBER 13, I was among 50,000 people in the anti-Haig demo. Two days later, after visiting a few police stations, I found myself in prison, as a policeman certified that he saw me throwing stones. I had not thrown anything, and now I have strong proofs of my innocence (photos and witnesses). However, I was imprisoned for five weeks and I think that it might be useful for everybody to know a bit about it.

Berlin might seem to be a very permissive city but German justice is powerful and quite pitiless. Apart from a few bank robbers and junkies who represent the greatest part of the prison population, the women I met were in jail for quite unimportant things. The least one gets for stealing a pair of shoes or a bottle of whiskey is one month.



FREEDOM FOR ALL—graffiti on the Berlin Wall

If you ever get caught, innocent or not, the police can keep you up to midnight on the day following your arrest. Then you see the judge who decides if you remain free or go to jail.

The biggest prison for men is Moabit (2,500 men). The biggest for women is Lehrterstraße (about 500 women). There are other smaller prisons such as Kantstraße, where I was. Kantstraße is very small (22 women, almost a family!) and to my great surprise I soon discovered that through my window I could see and talk to men prisoners (about 50 men) on the other side of the yard.

From the first day I asked to be alone but there can be up to ten people in one cell. My new home was about 1.5 metres wide and 4 metres long. It had a bed, a table, a chair, a cupboard, a toilet, a washbasin and a heater, a window with strong bars facing the iron door which had a spy-hole at about 2 metres from the ground. For communication and sunlight the whole prison population sits on cupboards or stands on tables for hours and hours.

Breakfast is at seven o'clock (eight o'clock on weekends) with dark or white bread and margarine plus hot water for coffee. We called 'coffee' what is in fact chicory without caffeine. At ten o'clock free hour: an hour in a yard with a few trees and flowers, an hour to speak, walk and run, take the sun and be with the others. At eleven o'clock hot water for 'coffee'. At twelve the only hot meal of the day and distribution of the *Tagesspiegel* (free), hot water again. At five bread and margarine plus cheese or paté, hot water.

In Kantstraße one has a shower three times a week in groups of four or five. Every week one can buy things from a list: food, tobacco and beauty products—up to sixty marks worth. The orders take one week to arrive. When the judge has dealt with every individual's case, all women can stay together in the TV and ping-pong rooms from five to nine.

In every cell there is a speaker for radio and the stations are centrally chosen in Moabit. Lights are turned out at midnight. Radios can be switched on from six in the morning until ten in the evening. The prison also provides all the necessary clothes but prisoners don't necessarily have to wear them, the cells are carefully controlled every week during the free hour or shower times and letters from other prisoners or 'illegal' books are taken away. So that was my time table for a month and it still is for several thousand people in Berlin.

There are a few special problems for foreigners. When I was imprisoned I did not speak one word of German, so language was my main problem. On the first day I was completely lost, ready for free hour when they came to get me for the shower or getting a pencil when I wanted writing paper.

I was forced to learn German very quickly; the main problem is for hearings or for official papers. Everything is in German and absolutely none of the papers are translated. They only provide an interpreter for the trial. I was lucky because my lawyer spoke very good English.

Language is also a problem when it comes to letters and visits as all letters are read by the judge. In German they take about one week to arrive. I got my first letter after a month and my parents and friend got mine also one month later. Visits were another problem. A prisoner can receive a half-hour visit every two weeks but they are listened to by a warden and have to be in German. When my mother came to visit me she had to pay an interpreter fifty marks for the half-hour.

For one month I had no news at all as I never succeeded in having the right to a foreign paper. I never had anything to read, although the consul sent me magazines and books, because, of course, they had first to be seen by the judge.

To conclude I would say that I never had so much spare time in my life and I tried to spend it in the most constructive way possible. I wrote a lot, drew a lot and learned as much German as I could. My days in prison reminded me of an English religious boarding school for girls where I spent my childhood, with a little less freedom but without masses and prayers.

I would say that as the food was not too bad, the guards always correct and the linen really clean, I had everything I needed except freedom, which is everything in itself.

Anon. From Bar Fax

22. 9. 81

DEATH ON THE POTSDAMERSTRASSE

NOW THEY'RE SHOOTING the teargas directly at the spot where he was killed. People are screaming; standing and scattering like so much chaff. A few canisters are tossed back at the police but not enough really to help. Only about twenty demonstrators remain seated at the spot now.

The police vans, roaring up with sirens going full blast. Stopping, shuddering, a few centimetres away. Stopping reluctantly—the drivers' faces make it clear they would prefer to drive on through. More canisters are rolled out and for a few seconds an eerie quasi-silence is there. Tableau of hell-clouds of gas rising, flashing blue lights, bulking green and white vans waiting.

But you're too busy trying to breathe to note much of it. The flimsy hankie seems to help a little but there's nothing to do about your eyes. Just try to catch occasional glimpses through the streaming tears. The smoke starts to clear away. And now comes the charge: the drab, running mass, riot sticks and shields standing out as symbolic promises. Alright, clasp hands on your head in an unequivocal posture of passive rest.

The first policeman is in too much of a hurry—just one casual blow from his stick in passing. But it's enough to knock you from the sitting position onto your back. The next two are more efficient. They stop, one on either side and get in full, well-aimed strokes. The image of hell is reinforced—those helmeted, goggled faces and writing mouths, with hate blaring out.

You catch a glimpse behind you, towards the spot—there are only a few demonstrators left and they are receiving the same treatment. At one point, to a policeman with arms drawn full back with riot stick, you ask, shout: 'What are you doing?'

You have no idea how many policemen have struck you—eight, nine, ten?—but it seems to have been going on for ever. Then, suddenly, there are no more policemen charging at you. You struggle into a sitting position and look behind—just in time to see them coming back. You can't raise your left arm so, this time, you try to make do with your right.

But none of them uses a riot stick on you. You realise later that it's probably because the right side of you is covered in blood from a head wound. Nonetheless, a few take half-hearted kicks at you and and one repeats the earlier performance of shouting at you to 'go away' and tries to help you with his boot.

It's probably about a half-hour later when they make the second attack.

Same procedure to start off except for the minor point that a van stops directly in front of you—maybe 50 centimetres away—and thoughtfully rolls a teargas canister under your legs. There seems to be more teargas this time too but that may be just imagination. Another change—this time the police are massing behind their vans and moving slowly forward as the gas clears.

Just then a medic runs up, stands over you as protection. You shout at him to go away. Can't see that the whole point of your being there is lost if you are protected! Finally, after argument, he goes. Then you notice that the police haven't moved any further forward, that they are listening to a girl who stands in front of the spot. Listening! As she pleads with them to respect an honest sorrow. Finally, she kneels down, head forward to the ground, arms outstretched in front,

palms open.

The police seem confused, are wavering. Long moments of indecision. Then they turn, get back into their vans, drive away. A victory for passive resistance!

It's not, of course!

The third attack comes at about one and a half hours later. Again the teargas, the sudden near-miss stops of the vans, the massing of policemen. A man in a wheelchair has positioned himself in front of the vans but he can only stop one at a time. A teargas canister is dropped under his wheelchair—he retreats reluctantly.

This time the police aren't stopping short of their own version of a final solution. Slowly, systematically, they start dragging away those few who are still on the spot. Ruthlessly clubbing with riot sticks and boots any show of the faintest resistance. Deliberately kicking away and scattering the flowers.



And there's the medic again. He refuses to leave, stands over you resolutely. The police are disturbed, try to push him away but he won't go. A girl is there too, haranguing the police loudly about their brutality.

Finally they lose patience, bundle the girl away into a van. A second medic who has been standing by at the side, also protecting, disappears—you don't know how or when. A fat faced, particularly enraged policeman starts clubbing the first medic from the back, riot stick sweeping in great thudding arcs. The medic is wearing a helmet and a leather jacket, but it's clear that he's being hurt. Nonetheless he stays there. Until, at last, a particularly hard jab in the small of the back pushes him away.

But you don't have time to see what has happened to him because Fatso is in with the boot, screaming with each kick for you to get out. You're beginning to find everything a bit hazy by this time so you don't really notice when or why the kicking stops. Anyway, you sit up again, look around. Now the area around the spot is totally cleared of demonstrators except for the man in the wheelchair and yourself. The police are standing ready in front of their vans, presumably waiting for stragglers of their own. You sit there, looking at the line of police in front of you.

THE EVICTIONS

On the following day *Innensenator* Lummer issued a final ultimatum to the nine houses. If they were not empty by the September 21 he would order the police to evict. The squatters and their supporters saw this as an obvious act of revenge for the embarrassment caused by the anti-Haig demonstration.

The next six days were ones of frenzied activity. The squatters put their main hope in the sponsors they had acquired over the summer. These were various organisations, writers, artists, intellectuals and persons of standing in the city who had 'adopted' particular houses. As a gesture of solidarity a lot of the sponsors began sleeping in the houses.

At dawn (the usual time for evictions and searches) on the September 21 Lummer's ultimatum ran out, but the police did not come. At dawn on the 22nd neither was there any sign that anything was going to happen, but at eleven o'clock, when it seemed that the squatters had been granted an extra day's grace and when the sponsors who had been staying in the houses overnight had left, thousands of riot police sealed off the areas of the city in which the nine houses were situated and began evictions. Two hours later this military style operation had been completed and the police had occupied the houses themselves to prevent them being retaken by the angry crowds which were quickly gathering.

Innensenator Lummer, in what was considered even by the Social Democrats and Liberals as an unprecedented display of arrogance, gave an after victory press conference in one of the houses. A protesting crowd which had gathered outside was baton charged by the police and driven onto the busy Potsdamer Straße, where, in the panic and confusion, one of the demonstrators, the 19 year old West German, Claus Jürgen Rattay, was hit by a bus and dragged 50 yards along the street. He was pronounced dead on admittance to hospital.

The reaction in the city was one of shock and anger. Sporadic street fighting continued all day. The Scientific and Teaching Union registered a demonstration for the evening. Before setting off for the demonstration, squatters in the TUWAT office listened to the six o'clock news silently. When it was switched off they remained silent. Nobody had anything to say. Nine houses,

nine autonomous communities, into which people had put work, energy and love, had been brutally stamped out of existence, and one of their number was dead. The tragedy was beyond words.

The angry shocked crowd assembled for the demonstration; the size of which was reminiscent of '68. In angry silence the long torch light procession marched through the dark streets at a funeral's pace. The police, also shocked and shaken by what they had unleashed, remained safely out of sight in the side streets. At Savigny Platz, where the demonstration was supposed to end, the loudspeaker van asked the people to disperse, but the crowd demanded that it continue with them to Potsdamer Straße. A few minutes later, the van announced over its loudspeaker that it would and requested to police to allow them to proceed in peace.

Then the demonstration began slowly moving towards the Kurfürstendamm. Slowly, what began as a chant became a deafening roar: 'Lummer is a murderer! Lummer is a murderer!' Passers-by and the few tourists watched the never ending stream of demonstrators. As they passed a Berlin flag on the Kurfürstendamm the demonstrators lowered it to half-mast. As it approached the Potsdamer Straße, the front of the demonstration passed the first of the evicted houses. From its windows the police began shooting volleys of teargas into the crowd. It had started.

In the following eight hours some of the most intense street fighting that West Berlin had seen since the war took place. Again and again the columns of police troop carriers were attacked with paving stones and petrol bombs and were forced to retreat. When they attempted to counter attack they were foiled by the rows of barricades that criss-crossed the streets. At the height of the fighting it was hard not to believe that a civil war was going on—burning barricades, ambulances rushing to and fro from the area, burnt out cars and looted shops in tear gas and smoke filled streets. At around three o'clock, when a lot of the demonstrators had left the area, the tide began to turn, and the police felt confident enough to leave the safety of their troop carriers and to start taking possession of the streets again. But it was only at dawn the next day that they could announce that they had the situation in control.

Later it was learnt that when the fighting was at its fiercest, the US Military Commander had informed the Senate that



Wolfgang Krowlow

Then, one time when you look behind, you see a photographer suddenly run forward to within a few metres of you. He flashes a shot, turns to run back. But the police are onto him immediately. Five or six bear him to the ground, try to take his camera away. But he holds fast so they half-carry, half-drag him back behind their lines. He holds the camera aloft, a futile attempt to protect it. The police lines close around you but you can still see a bit—the riot sticks and fists swinging around and down, a glimpse of a civilian leg seemingly dismembered among the rolling olive-green. And hear—the sickening thuds can only be those of wood and leather on flesh; and the screams.

After a long, long time, the police get back in their vans, drive away. You look around, at the wreckage, the deserted street, the crushed and scattered flowers. Everything seems very quite now. And hopeless.

There's a sound. It's an armoured car with a water cannon. Slowly moving towards you, sweeping the street clear of debris. And people.

You sit there, feeling that you might as well carry this through to the end. You don't really want to stay but you're so completely depressed that it doesn't seem worth moving. Not giving a damn anymore what happens.

And then there's an man and a woman there. Gently trying to drag you away. You protest, but then you don't really mean it. You've had enough. You walk with them, supported on either side. The water canon gives all three of you a short blast but they are strong enough to hold you up.

You leave them, walk home. Thinking about passive resistance.

Anon. From Bär Fax



NEW CHAUVINISM?



"SHUT UP, YOU OLD CUNT!" one male squatter screamed at another male squatter whose opinion he didn't approve of. The three hundred people attending the *Besetzerrat* (squatter's council) listened to this angry outburst without criticising him for what up until now, at least in left-wing circles, was an unheard of choice of words. It seems that the discussion initiated by the women's movement during the 70s on a 'new sensitivity' has disappeared under the cobbles of the squatting movement. Five women, who have lived or are still living in squatted houses, are now saying: "We are fed up with the euphoric self-intoxication of the squatters and the squatting movement". They speak of a 'new chauvinism'. The following article, written by them, describes the problems women in the houses are having.

"They can take the houses away from us but not our experiences!" We want to say something about the experiences women have had in the squatted houses.

An example: Two squatters, a man and a woman, meet in the hall of a squatted house. They have an argument about who should go on holiday first which immediately escalates into one about which of the other should move out. For the woman it ended with a broken nose, a black eye, a split scalp and bruises. (The kind of injuries people injured on demonstrations get!) That she wasn't beaten to death is thanks only to the incidental presence of another squatter. Otherwise, the support she got from the people in the house was non-existent. If the guy hadn't voluntarily moved out four days later—to his girlfriend's(sic)—nothing further than a discussion of his state of mind would probably have occurred. But now that he is gone, the woman is being accused because she made an official complaint to the police. "We don't want to have anything to do with the State against which we are struggling," they say "we want to solve our own problems ourselves." But what other option did this woman have except to fall back on complaining to the police, when there was no response from the community in the house?

This case is not unique, not the well-known exception that proves the rule. Women are threatened and beaten up in other houses too, and not only by neurotics but also by 'totally normal' men. There are three ways of reacting to this: one, accept it and adapt; two, try and behave 'dominantly' and try and 'counter balance' the aggressive and violent atmosphere which exists in many houses; or three, move out. It is women who suffer most under the male defined structures, and it is they who are put under pressure to keep the place 'supportive and homely'.

It's not for nothing that a lot less women than men live in the houses. Responsibility for the work of emo-

tional maintenance—sharing out cuddle units among the 'hard men' to prepare them for the next 'street fight'—and the organisation of the household and hygiene is left to the women. And on top of that, they have to fight against the monopoly of knowledge that men have. The women carry out the rubble and do the washing up, while the men install *their* electric cables. And when women actually assert their right to be involved in electrical work, the guys find it too much bother to respond, and even if they do, they do so in a totally arrogant way.

Is this the way of life for which we are struggling? What about the following suggestions:

- (1) Open up an account into which every house makes a contribution and out of which every woman squatter who is beaten up will be compensated. The less women there are in a house, the higher the contribution by that house should be!
- (2) Apply to *Netzwerk* (alternative bank which funds alternative projects) for money to be paid to women squatters for the social work they do.
- (3) Hold seminars for women squatters on 'How do I organise a 30 person household!' or 'First aid for the aftermath of arguments in the household!' or 'How do we feel good despite it all?'

Juliane, Heike, Renate, Jutta and Claudia,
From *Die Tageszeitung* (7 August 1981)

WE HAVE OTHER have had other experiences than those described in the article 'New Chauvinism' by the women from *Verein für Frauenkommunikation* (Women's Communication Union) and from squatted houses. We want to give an account of what happened in our house—Jagowstraße 12—which is supposed to be exemplary of the ruthless and violent macho behavior of the everyday life of squatters.

We believe that, as people living in the house concerned, we are in a better position to know about the development of our group than the writers, who through the women's centre on the ground floor, can't know everything that goes on here.

It is simply wrong to put this incident in the category of 'macho man beats up woman'. The problems which 'macho' W has been unable to come to terms with for a long time, and the fact that we as a group and house community has been unable to get on with him, has been discussed to death a number of times in the house. This is the first time that a woman is on the receiving end of it, and to a far more serious extent than has been the case previously. He could have chosen anyone of us to unload his frustrations on! We cannot agree that out of this single incident that one

he was prepared to assist in controlling the situation should the city police be unable to do so.

In the following days the Potsdamer Straße remained closed to traffic and people came to lay flowers on the spot where Claus Jürgen Rattay had been killed. In the Senate, Lummer denied any responsibility for the tragic outcome of the evictions, but he announced that it was unlikely that there would be any more houses evicted until after Easter '82.

NO FUTURE WINTER

After Rattay's death and the eviction of the nine houses a long cold winter of pessimism and perspectivelessness set in. For many the phrase 'No Future!' became a slogan. It was also a time when the peace movement became the focal point of alternative politics. Reagan's statement that he could envisage a limited nuclear war in Europe shocked most Germans; even the news commentators were visibly freaked by it; and there was no end of explaining it away as some sort of misunderstanding. In Bonn, 300,000 people turned up at a peace demonstration; and, privately, people were talking about getting out before Armageddon started.

In the houses it looked as if the energy and the creativity of the summer had disappeared overnight. The Frontkino closed down, the pirate radio stopped broadcasting and *Die Besetzer Post* stopped coming out. The differences between the '81ers and the '68ers, between the punks and the politicals, between the *Mollis* (hawks: from Molotov cocktail) and the *Muslis* (doves: from muesli), which during the summer had not been evident, began now to split the movement and drain it of its vitality. Disillusioned, many people left the houses; but others took their places. The *Besetzerrat* stopped meeting; and when it did meet again, in early spring, it provisionally divided itself into two—negotiators and non-negotiators.

However, with the approach of Easter and another summer things began to get better. It had become obvious though that the idea of squatting a house and transforming it into a utopian island in the middle of capitalist society had been naive.

POLICE TERROR

On April 26 the winter truce ended. Without warning the police raided a house in Kreuzberg and carried out an eviction. This action was unexpected; a lot of the squatters had been discussing models for a possible legalisation of the occupied houses with various authorities. That evening a small and peaceful spontaneous demonstration was tear-gassed and baton charged by a large force of police on the grounds that it had not been registered and was thus illegal. The police behaved with a brutality not shown before, and spent the rest of the night driving around Kreuzberg breaking up any small groups that gathered. There was little resistance. Scores of demonstrators and passers-by were injured; only three policemen.



The next evening a registered demonstration of 5,000 people made its way to the house that had been evicted. As it went down the narrow street where the house stood, the police inside the house began lobbing teargas grenades at point-blank range into the crowd. Blinded and terrorised the crowd dispersed into the neighbouring streets, many falling and being trampled on. Then the force of 2,000 police went into action. The next two hours can only be described as an orgy of state violence. Everybody on the streets was considered a legitimate victim for the teargas and the heavy wooden batons; small groups, individuals, passers-by, people on bicycles, people coming out of the U-Bahn (tube), even injured people lying on the ground were savagely beaten. Escape routes were blocked off; teargas was shot into the local U-Bahn station; ambulances on their way to the hospital were not allowed through police road blocks.

The next day West Berliners were told by the Springer press and the state-run television that police had been forced to break up a rioting crowd, and Innensenator Lummer was publically congratulating the police on the fine work they were doing.

can come to the conclusion that there is a problem of macho brutality among us.

It is incorrect to say that it was because of the lack of response by us in the house that M made an official complaint to the police. She made the complaint directly after the incident, as she was being brought to hospital. She did so for other reasons—reasons which we rejected then and still reject. But that's enough about this particular case.

Sexist behavior, men's monopoly of knowledge and so on, is also a problem in our house, and we do try and do something about it, though perhaps too little. And we find it is right that this should be spoken about openly. The fact that the established press will use it against us is no reason to keep quiet about it.

However, we really can't start anything with the rest of the article, which uses one example of brutality against a woman to argue the arrival of a new chauvinism. That conflict and aggression is expressed violently in men more than in women is for us a meaningful starting point for a discussion, but we find the conclusion of the article, even if it has validity in certain cases, exaggerated and a hindrance to an understanding of the problem of male/female role playing, and we also find it to be a cramped form of feminism.

*From the women and men squatters of
Hausfriedensbruch
A letter in Die Tageszeitung*

"OLD CUNT!" These words, according to the Tageszeitung, came out of the words of a man and a squatter. If that is male chauvinism, then what is the expression "stupid prick" when it comes out of the mouth of a woman?

With these insults one doesn't get very far in a discussion, and a discussion which goes around in circles leads to nothing new. It is true, and it is a pity, that the day to day language among squatters is not the friendliest, but it's hard to find the friendliest words where you're in a situation of continuous stress, in which drastic means must be used again and again against an ever present threat. In this kind of situation being friendly and polite gets mislaid and becomes something which does not come about naturally, but rather something to be learned anew in a new social environment.

No one can be expected all the time to express his/her tender self, which doubtless lies hidden behind the hard armour, without having a miraculous ability to change. Everyone can see for themselves how much time it takes to restore an emotional balance after a series of heavy street fights or searches.

It is inevitable, given the island-like existence which the houses experience—and even the even greater demands placed by the uncertain legal position—that there will be outbreaks of aggression, also against people with whom one lives, regardless of whether they are men or women. It is not the most sensitive people who live in the houses. So-called macho types, male and female, are able to put up with life in the houses better than more sensitive souls, who are in any case more likely to be found with Bhagwan in Poona or in therapeutic communes.

Arguments do develop into fights in the houses, but such fights are not the order of the day, as your article would have us believe. Black eyes and cuts are the exception, and you can be certain, that no comparison can be made with the number of women who are beaten up in normal society, where out of fear of further beatings, women don't dare to go public about it. Violence which does occur, occurs mainly between equals as in other Wohngemeinschaften (commune; anything from three people up), and are is often as much initiated by women as by men. However, we don't want to trivialise such cases, and certainly not the one documented in your article. But we do find it wrong to sensationalise how it happened, turn the inexcusable example into a rule, and then use this rule to announce the arrival of a new chauvinism.

*Vera, Gabi, Annette, Helmut Hack (squatters from
Lausitzerstraße) and Norbert (Kucuck)
A letter in Die Tageszeitung*



Platform for tourists to look over the Wall

THE FIVE WOMEN who wrote the article on new chauvinism have said something which should have been said a lot earlier. My experience with this sort of thing has not been so much in our house as in the 'meetings' of the movement—regional and central. I can confirm exactly what they've described—big mouthed 'men' who think they are 'it' and who talk such unbelievable arrogant shit that I am reminded of the Marlborough ads in the cinema. Express any doubt about their statements and they go for you!

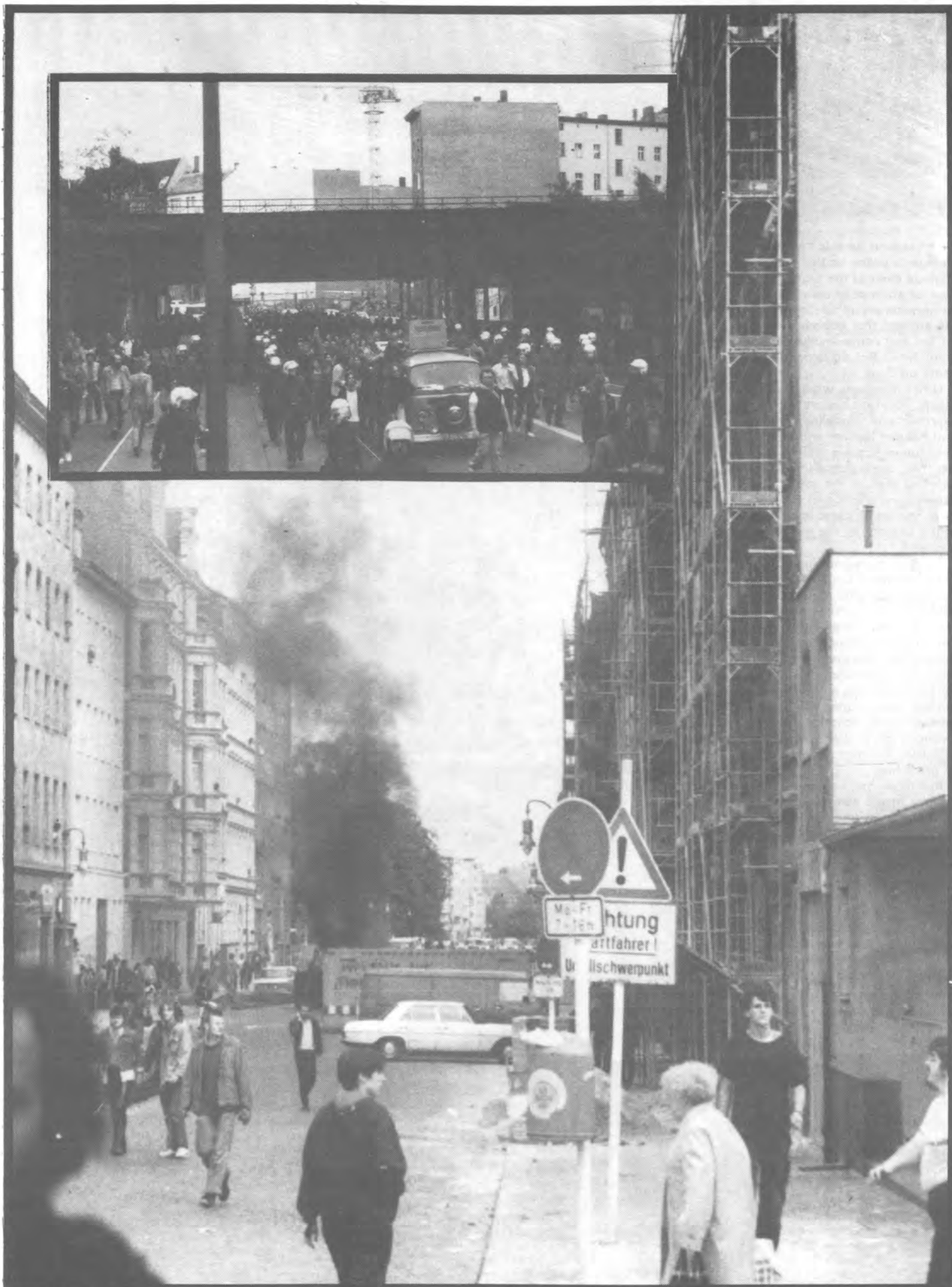
What particularly worries me is those squatters who are playing the role for all it's worth, basically warming themselves by the fire that someone else has lit. Earlier they were barely active, except perhaps in left-wing pubs, but since then after every happening on the street have a new adventure story to tell.

What kind of an idea these guys have of a humane world, or of human relationships based on decency, is beyond me. The idea that they are in a majority fills me with horror, as does the idea that the long and conscientious efforts of the women's movement in 70s only opened the eyes of those men who were involved in it, but meant nothing to the others. No Future is right—for guys like this!

*Ute
A letter in Die Tageszeitung*



A view over the Wall



Main pic: behind a burning barricade in inner Kreuzberg. Insert: a demo against the Springer press monopoly at which the demonstrators are outnumbered several times by the police



THE REAGAN VISIT

The reason for this sudden change in police tactics was obvious even at the time. It was an attempt to create such an atmosphere of terror on the streets, that nobody would go out and cause embarrassment when Ronald Reagan came on June 11.

Other measures were also taken; squatted houses were searched and vandalised and anti-Reagan leaflets and banners found in them were confiscated; the police also took to painting over all the anti-American graffiti; and finally a total ban on all demonstrations in the city during the visit was imposed.

Reagan landed on June 10 in Bonn to attend the NATO summit conference on rearmament. 400,000 other people also went to Bonn. They came to take part in a demonstration demanding disarmament. The next day he flew into West Berlin, where the authorities nursed vague hopes of repeating the reception John F Kennedy got in 1962 when 100,000 Berliners turned out to greet him.

But times had changed. The intense media campaign, the distribution of free American flags, and a day off work only brought a handful of Berliners out to hear Reagan deliver his "Wir sind alle Berliner speech!". ("We are all Berliners!") Kennedy had said that the proudest boast a free man could make was "Ich bin ein Berliner!" ("I am a Berliner!") History repeating itself as farce!



BERLIN GREETES ITS GUESTS





Street fighting during the Reagan visit



REAGAN'S LAST PICTURE SHOW, 11 June 1982

However the *Alternative Liste* defied the ban and called for a demonstration in the city centre. About 5,000 people, at the risk of arrest and serious injury, turned up. The police surrounded the crowd with barbed wire barricades and informed them that they would have to stay where they were until Reagan had left the city. But the crowd, furious at the construction of this temporary 'concentration camp', broke out. The police were taken off guard by this resistance and had to retreat suddenly, leaving behind one of their troop carriers to be burned.

This was the start of more heavy street fighting—as intense as that took place after Claus Jürgen Rattay was killed. 300 people were arrested and 200 of those injured required medical treatment.

During the following week, against the background of the predictable inflammatory press campaign, numerous houses were attacked by right-wing groups and the main offices of the *Alternative Liste* were burned down and Innensenator Lummer announced that he was now considering supplying the police with CS gas and ordering the eviction of more houses.

Frank Jackson, July 1982
Willibaldalexis Straße 11
From Ecomedia's Squatting in West Berlin



JULY 1982—
DECEMBER 1983

NEW LIFE IN AN OLD FACTORY

THE GESAMTLOSUNG

THE CAMPAIGN for a *Gesamtlosung* (comprehensive solution) was the last united front presented by the squatters. This was during the autumn and early winter of 1982 when 122 houses were still occupied. The main demand was for a stop to all evictions i.e. contracts for the houses who were willing to negotiate and an eviction stop for the non-negotiating houses. Gone were the earlier demands for an amnesty and the release of prisoners.

The *Gesamtlosung* was an attempt to save as much as could be saved and at the same time exercise as much solidarity as possible with the houses which were not negotiating. Its weakness was that it did not come from the squatters themselves; it came from the sponsors, the *Alternative Liste*, tenant organisations, *Netzbau* (the alternative building and development company which was set up to finance the contracts which the houses were to get), and other sympathetic 'established' organisations. Some felt that it was a manipulation of the movement from above; however, it was generally supported, and at the time the squatters seemed incapable of launching their own initiative.

The *Gesamtlosung* had its contradictions, but they were not the reason for its failure: the Senate was responsible for that. It brought squatters and their supporters out onto the streets again in large numbers, but the impression of strength and unity that this gave was not the true picture, which was that the movement was on the retreat and divided. The *Gesamtlosung* was a negotiating concept developed from a position of weakness. What was seen by some as its necessary flexibility was seen by others as inconsistency.



FOR MOST PEOPLE the word 'factory' conjures up a picture of meaningless, boring, stultifying and nerve-racking work. The picture is reinforced if the factory happens to date from the nineteenth century, has a Dickensian facade of bricks and small windows and is squeezed between four streets in one of Berlin's most densely populated areas. Such a factory stands in Cuvrystraße, Kreuzberg 36.

Moreover in this case the old adage, 'don't judge a book by its cover', really comes into play. For within the four-feet thick walls one finds a combination of over ten groups, clubs and businesses concentrated not on profit of an economic kind but of a social, cultural and political nature. The factory has been squatted and re-christened *Kerngehäuse* (central or core houses). Within the same block an eight storey high apartment complex has also been squatted, re-establishing the old idea of living and work-place in the same area. The juxtaposition of home and work is typical of the working class areas of Berlin and helped create positive structures by weaving together living, working, leisure and cultural activities. It also strengthened co-operative ties between the many small businesses that were to be found in the *Hinterhöfe* (courtyards) behind the apartments.

History of *Kerngehäuse*

The factory was built in 1888 by a carpenter, Carl Ahrens, who died four years later. It was then sold to a Herr Müller who manufactured sewing machine parts, later concentrating on children's sewing machines. These innocent toys were set aside during both world wars for the production of machine guns and other weapons. Due to Allied bombing the factory was reduced from 6,000 sq. metres to 2,600 sq. metres and after 1946 produced only children's sewing machines.

In 1977 Müller went bankrupt and Cuvrystraße 20 was sold to K. D. Schütze for DM 500,000. One and a half years later it was sold to a building firm, *Dr Marx GmbH*, for DM 1.9 million. A short time later a consortium of speculators, called *COMBAU*, including Dr Marx, bought the whole of Block 133 (the factory and accompanying apartments) and planned a large scale modernisation (read demolition).

This sale prompted squatters to move into the empty apartments in the front of the factory. At the same time Citizen's Action Group SO36 (SO36 is the post code for inner Kruzberg) and the Zip Committee became the legal representatives of both the squatters and the long established residents threatened by the speculation. Zip and the SO36 group put forward an alternative renovation plan for the block, determined to halt the 'delapidation' plan of *COMBAU*.

In June 1980, *COMBAU* appeared to be giving into the citizens' initiative by allowing the complex to be rented—but only until the following September. By this

time people were very excited about using the factory to house their various projects. They were also aware that the winter would soon be upon them, and typical of such situations, Dr Marx and *COMBAU* had not invested one pfennig in the maintenance of the building. It was then that Dr Marx came and saw the building for the first time and began to get papers flowing that would allow the squatters to rent, and over a period of three years, to purchase the block. Dr Marx stipulated that the repairs had to be carried out by the lessees. So began the large scale squat of both factory and apartments.

However the contract between *COMBAU* and the squatters came to a sudden end after the police cleared a squat in Kreuzberg on December 12 1980. During the action the police used their truncheons and many arrests were made. As a result of this, *Kerngehäuse* broke its ties with the speculators and came out in full support of the Squatting Movement.

Kerngehäuse today

The philosophy of the people involved in the *Kerngehäuse* is to help break the demarcation between life and work. Through their various projects they hope to offer an alternative to the modern economist's view of 'labour'. For the latter has been brought up to consider work as little more than a necessary evil. From the point of view of the employer it is in any case simply an item of cost, to be reduced to a minimum if it cannot be eliminated altogether by automation. From the point of view of the worker, it is a 'disutility'; to work is to make a sacrifice of one's leisure and comfort, the wages being a kind of compensation for the sacrifice.



The folk down in Cuvrystraße take a different view of work. They see the function of work to be at least threefold: a means of utilizing and developing one's faculties; a way to combat one's own ego-centred nature by joining with others in a common task; and to produce the goods and services needed for a 'reasonable existence'.

They work with friends, have no bosses and everyone is entitled to an equal voice. They are aware of the emotional deprivation that traditional work methods, such as division and specialization of labour can cause, so once somebody begins a task they see it through to the end.

Kerngehäuse projects

The factory is home for the following collectives: *Wood Workshop*, *Self-Help Health Group*, *Non-Nuclear Engineering Group*, *Babylonia*, *Taxi Collective*, *Food Co-op*, *Ratibor Theatre*, 5 aus 36.

On account of their past bureaucratic and legal struggles they have a wealth of firsthand experience and advice which they willingly give to those involved in



squatting or related movements. Through the *Kerngehäuse* workshops they are able to offer help and advice in the repair of squatted houses. Their advice is also sought by their more established neighbours which earns them respect in the neighbourhood.

The *Wood Workshop* was established in August 1978 with six people, five of whom earned their living building stages and props for the film industry. Now they specialise in the carpentry side of renovation—repairing floors, windows etc. There is so much work to be done that they often work with other collectives. Over breakfast they discuss the workday ahead, and meet once a week with the other collectives of the *Kerngehäuse*. They also have a small metal workshop which manufactures potters' wheels and windmills. They hope to make money installing central heating, stressing solar and other renewable energy forms. The money from this venture will be invested in the general renovation and improvement of the factory.

The *Self-Help Health Group* is run by a group of people from the health world—physical therapists, women doctors and inhalation specialists. They attempt to heighten people's body awareness and to educate them into using the health industry sensibly. They have plans to form a library and hold the following in the *Kerngehäuse*: breathing and massage workshop, acupuncture groups, Shiatsu and foot reflection therapy. Many alternative medical groups profit handsomely through their services, but the money this group makes from workshops is ploughed back into the renovation of the factory and patient groups.

They hold an open appointment every Tuesday between 4.30 and 7.00. Here you can get more information and also medical advice, should you be feeling under the weather.

The *Non-Nuclear Engineering Group* specialises in windmills for watering crops and tree plantations, and offers workshops for those interested in renovation.

Babylonia is an association of colourful people whose aim is to help broaden peoples' cultural and political outlook through the free exchange of foreign opinions and ideas. This is achieved by organising music and information evenings on countries all over the world. For example, in October, *TALKA*, a music group from Peru, performed Indian and contemporary Peruvian

songs in the *Kerngehäuse*, and last month the factory was the venue for a Guatemalan information evening, with films and discussions describing the situation there. Naturally, one acquires a deeper knowledge of another country when one is able to speak and read that country's language. So, through *Babylonia* one can, with native speakers, learn Turkish, Spanish, French, Italian, Portugese and German.

Babylonia also runs programmes to help foreigners in Berlin gain a better understanding of the German cultural and political situation. No knowledge of German is presumed. They meet in the *Kerngehäuse* or in the cafés and pubs and study such topics as contemporary German music and the social problems of the Turkish community. They also go to the theatre and cinema or make a big meal together in one of the teacher's homes. *Babylonia* feel that this is an ideal and natural way to learn German. Most participants look upon *Babylonia* as a group of friends rather than an educational institution.

The *Taxi Collective* was formed in April 1980 with thirty people, aged between 23 and 40, most of whom are students or ex-students who had worked earlier as taxi drivers. Because of the large number involved it was decided to divide the people into groups of five. Each group could then take responsibility for the office side of the operation as well as the repairs, the latter being conducted by the collective in its well equipped workshop. Their pay is similar to other taxi companies but all profit is channelled into various alternative projects.

The *Food Co-op* helps people to buy natural foods at a cheaper price than the usual natural food shops. They do this by buying organic food in bulk direct from the producers at a price 30-50% of the norm. They are willing to help anyone interested in starting their own food co-op.

The *Ratibor Theatre Group* was established in 1977 by a group of people with experience in street theatre, traditional drama, cabaret, political satire and comedy. They write pieces themselves, concentrating mostly on socio-political conflicts.

5 aus 36 (Five from Kreuzberg 36) is the *Kerngehäuse* rock group, famous for the writing of the first squatters' song '*Laß die Leute freil!*' (Let the people free!), which can be bought in good record stores and leftwing political bookshops.

All those involved in the *Kerngehäuse* stress the fun and intimacy their jobs bring them and the knowledge that their work is helping prevent the destruction of Kreuzberg. Their projects are a reflection of their belief that work and leisure are complimentary parts of the same living process and cannot be separated without destroying the joy of work and bliss of leisure.

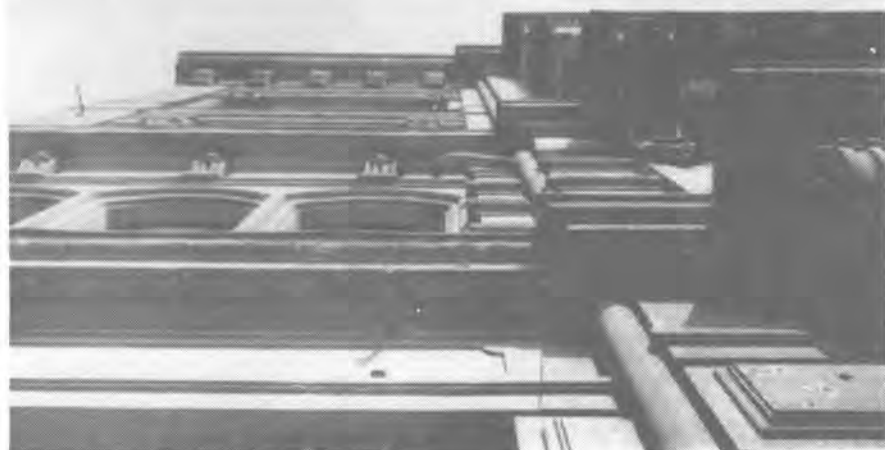
Corliss Anderson and Eddie Roberts
From Bar Fax



For example, when in October Reuter/Phlugerstraße, two non-negotiating houses, were evicted and on the same day the Senate announced that 26 other houses were almost certain to be given contracts within a few weeks, there were protests, but the idea of negotiating a *Gesamtlosung* survived.

The 26 houses which were to be among the first to get contracts were owned by *Neue Heimat*, a building company owned by the German Trade Union Council. On November 2 two of them, in the Massenstraße, in the district of Schöneberg, were evicted without warning. The reason given by the *Innensenat* was that the houses were 'criminal' and a 'burden on the environment'. These evictions were a slap in the face for those who had hoped that a *Gesamtlosung* might actually come about.

The *Neue Heimat* said it was willing to return the houses to the squatters on a contractual basis if the Senate agreed, and for a few days this seemed possible. The final rejection of this by the Senate meant the end of the *Gesamtlosung* and



further negotiations. In December *Netzbau* was dissolved and while the General Secretary of the Berlin Christian Democrats, Diepgen, who is due to become Mayor in 1984 (which he did), was saying that for reasons of 'social hygiene' more houses might have to be evicted, the squatters in the 100 or so remaining houses which were still occupied were talking, publically at least, about a future without contracts.

DECLINE

1983 was more or less the funeral of the movement. The non-negotiating stance taken after the Massenstraße evictions quickly faded into nothing when houses and groups of houses, faced with the threat of eviction, started negotiating on their own initiative. In February *Netzbau* had even been formed again.

Evictions followed one after the other; some of the squatters left their houses voluntarily rather than face the trauma and subsequent court cases which would follow an eviction. But also some houses got their contracts; some of these retreated into the relative safety of legality, others used their new legal status as a base for continued political and social engagement.

All this took place against a background of continual criminalisation, divisions within the movement, a growing lack of *Power* (positive energy) and fantasy, and at a time when other political issues were coming to the fore.

CRIMINALISATION

In 1981 the police had been taken off-guard and were very often unable to control the situation on the streets. By the beginning of 1983 this was no longer the case; by then, due to increased manpower and patrols, better equipment and tactics, and more brutal methods, they had regained control.

From 1981 on the numbers of people going to squatter demonstrations also began to drop steadily; this was due to the increased likelihood badly injured and/or ending up in jail. The regular searches of the houses, usually under the most frivolous pretexts continued unabated; in the three year period over 600 searches took place.



Festival at the Kukuck, summer 1983

WOMEN'S CAFÉ

THE EXPECTED FLOOD of visitors to our café didn't materialise. Instead, we became very aware of the kind of the difficulties the women-only pubs which have closed down have had. Women came but they often sat the whole day over one cup of coffee—at one mark a cup. We often had plenty of fun with our visitors, and especially time to chat with them, but we also had a lot to do, like washing up, keeping the place clean and so on. And after a shift we were often exhausted. And then on top of that, at the end of the evening there was very often only a profit of five marks. Our prices are very low, which is the way it should be for an alternative project in a squatted house. Yet despite this, it did happen that some women complained about our prices, brought their own cakes and even wanted an extra cup of coffee for free because our cups are different sizes. Not that we made a loss, but the place is no gold mine. And eventually the time for paying electricity bills and buying in coal for the winter arrived, and the whole place had to be, and still is being, renovated. The income we get has never covered the cost of the renovation, not to mention allowing us to fulfill such extravagant desires as getting a cream mixer or a decent stereo system. We financed the renovation mainly through benefits, membership fees and donations.

We thought we were going to have more time to be creative in the café, to get involved in the groups ourselves, to realise our own ideas, to have exhibitions and to do publicity work. But running the café took up too much of our time and energy. The worst thing about it was that the work always tended to develop into a routine. In the beginning it was new and interesting, but gradually it became more routine-like. There is no doubt about it: idealism disappears as the



Frauenbewegung und Häuserkampf — unversöhnlich?

alternative way of working becomes monotonous.

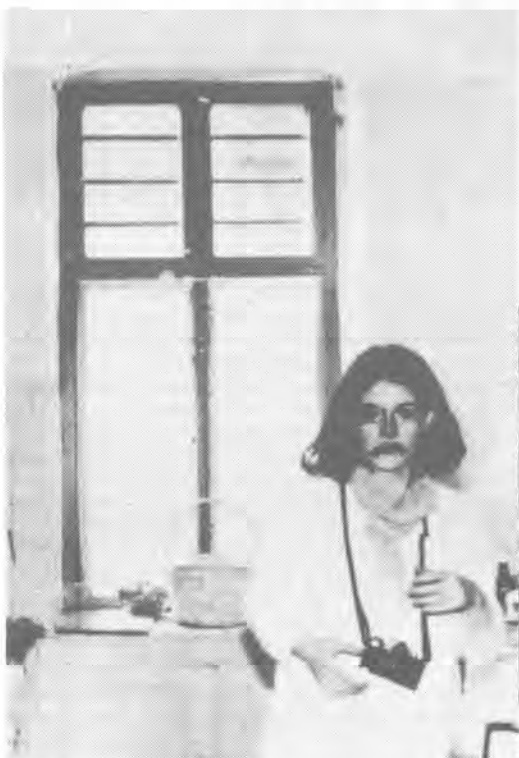
But on the other hand, what we offer has been met with a lot of interest. Women who never had anything to do with the women's movement came to us. All kinds of women came—older women, single women, housewives with children, schoolgirls, foreign women who were looking for information, and women who were looking for a group to get involved in. Without question, our work is important.

A further problem arises from the make-up of our group. The necessity for the work to be done in shifts led to it being made up entirely of students. Many working women couldn't afford the amount of time the shifts entailed, and in the end, left the group. Just like in nearly all projects in the left and alternative scene, it was the students, who have a flexible time plan and want fulfilling and 'politically correct' work, who kept the café going.

In the long run we must find other forms of finance and working. It is doubtful whether we can continue in our present form. Many of us have to work as well as study—so we are faced with three demands on our time: studying, earning money and working in the café. A lot of us, during the holidays in particular, have to do casual work, and it then becomes difficult to share the shifts out among the few women who are left. However, we have managed to keep the place open since it started, except for one-week breaks in summer and in winter, though the present political and economic situation (cuts in grants, less casual work and badly paid at that) can be felt clearly in the amount of time and energy we are putting into the place.

But we are looking for ways out of this vicious circle of alternative self-exploitation.

From Frauenbewegung und Häuserkampf—unversöhnlich? (Women's Movement and Squatting Movement—irreconcilable?)



Frauenbewegung und Häuserkampf — unversöhnlich?

Slowly too, the legal machinery of the courts rolled into action. It took time before this took effect; people were very often tried in 1982 or 1983 for something which had happened in 1981; but the fines and prison sentences (up to two years for previous breach of the peace) were a constant demoralising pressure on people; and in particular suspended prison sentences were very effective in keeping people off the streets.

The Springer press also continued its campaign and was another wheel in the mechanism to isolate squatters from the population and facilitate the process of criminalisation.

Here are some concrete examples:

August 1982: The police search 15 houses in one day in order to confiscate a poster which has been declared illegal because on it *Innensenator* Lummer is described as a 'right-wing radical'. The police art squad (favourite colour: grey) goes into action to paint over the undesirable object wherever it appears.

Winter 1982: The Public Prosecutor's Office starts investigations into the activities of the Kreuzberg Councillor Orłowsky, a supporter of the squatters. The crimes under investigation are 'aiding and abetting trespassing' (while acting as a go-between during negotiations he went into a squatted house) and theft (he used official notepaper and stamps to write to somebody in jail).

Winter 1982: A Berlin court threatens to separate a child from its mother if they continue to live in a squatted house.

January 1983: The police search Fidicinstraße 43 and cut off the water supply on the grounds that it is being stolen. A few hours later they arrive back with the health authorities, who disinfect the house by putting rat poison everywhere, including people's beds. ('Social hygiene'!)

May 1983: The police arrest five people in a bar in Kreuzberg and charge them with arson. The next day the Springer press publishes their photos and names and says there is not enough evidence, so could the public come forward and help. A demonstration to protest against this 'trial by Springer' was organised.

The small number of demonstrators were outnumbered several times by the police, who surrounded them completely all along the demonstration route to the Springer building. At the back of the 'demonstration' which the police tried to prevent being photographed, people were kicked and hit with shields by



Inner Kreuzberg

the police to get them to hurry along. Charges against the five arrested have since been dropped.

June 1983: The eviction of the Willibaldalexis/Heimstraße houses: The local Protestant church had been negotiating with the owners to buy the houses and then rent them cheaply to the squatters, minus the ground floor which the church wanted to keep and turn into a *Kindergarten*. Three days before the contracts are to be signed the police arrive and carry out evictions. *Innensenator* Lummer has decided that the houses are 'criminal'. Among the crimes cited were 'insulting of holders of official office', namely Lummer himself, and 'incitement'—all committed by the hanging of banners from the windows of the houses.

These few examples of how the state dealt with the squatter 'problem' are only the tip of the iceberg. By the end of 1983 all city districts, with the exception of Schöneberg and inner Kreuzberg, had been systematically cleared and less than 30 houses were still squatted.



USAF Tempelhof air base—playing at war



ENCHANTED ISLE



TRAVELLING THROUGH EAST GERMANY by road, one passes signposts every few kilometres which reassure the driver that he or she is now only such-and-such a distance from the capital city of the German Democratic Republic: *BERLIN Hauptstadt der DDR—97km* they say, or whatever; the same road signs also grudgingly inform the motorist that the same *Autobahn* serves a mysterious place, or state of being, or both, called '*Transit Westberlin*'—this piece of information having been painted in different coloured letters on a different coloured background, as if a dangerous virus had been isolated to prevent any spread of infection. Whether you see '*Westberlin*', an insane, artificial atoll of consumerism and capitalist decay, or '*West Berlin*', an island of freedom in a sea of red, depends on your political taste, but both attitudes recognise the manner in which both Berlins are used as physical manifestations of the ideologies and polarities of the Cold War.

Of course, both of the attitudes outlined above, precisely because of the way they are locked into a political structure laid down nearly forty years ago, are for many people (the writer included) equally outdated and equally dangerous. And it is West Berlin, with which this article is concerned, which has ironically enough become one of the centres of an alternative politics which sees the blind materialism and consumption of western (and particularly West German) society as equally oppressive as the authoritarian bureaucracies of the East. It is against this background that any profile of West Berlin should be tested. What follows are a 'few notes'; a tour at random through an enchanted isle; some dreams of unease.



Kukuck—child playing happily in the debris

The coaches

There is a Soviet war memorial on the western side of the Wall, a few hundred yards from the Brandenburg Gate. This section of the road is sealed off at both ends and only coach tours are allowed access; an endless convoy of these coaches drives slowly though the automatic gate. In the tourist season, this goes on all day. Opposite the memorial in Tiergarten there is a break in the trees and a steel fence where people also gather to stare and take pictures. From this spot, ten years ago, someone shot one of the Russian soldiers. On the other side of the memorial, on the north-west corner of Tiergarten, lies the Reichstag. Rebuilt in 1961 it houses a permanent exhibition entitled 'Questions of German History'; the questioning nature of the exhibition fails somewhat as it reaches the post-war era and the creation of the Bundesrepublik—some things, it seems, should not be inquired into too closely. The tour coaches regularly disgorge their loads here as well. The almost identical flags of the DDR and the Bundesrepublik are flown from the Brandenburg Gate and the Reichstag respectively; they are rival banners on a medieval battlefield.



American tank in the Allied Military Parade, summer 1983

An argument in a bar

A Thursday night in Kreuzberg, a delapidated area close to the Wall populated by immigrant workers, squatters etc., attractive and energetic in its own way. This particular night there are van loads of riot police parked at strategic points. On Heinrichplatz groups of people are drinking outside a pub. Every two minutes a police van drives through the square at high speed. There is an occasional bang as a stone hits a moving target. Suddenly the square is full of vans and cops. Everyone (even punks) squeezes back into the pub and the staff pull down the metal shutter over the door. We carry on drinking as the cops line up on the pavement with their batons and riot shields. Eventually the confrontation subsides and the shutter is raised. We move up the street to an upstairs bar on Oranienstrasse called, amusingly enough *Sláinte*. The Irish connection, whatever it is, isn't very obvious. Someone threw a small egg filled with paint from the window at a police van. Ten minutes later they come back in force. People come running up the stairs followed by white-helmeted cops with long batons. People move back down the room, some attempting to make a barricade with tables and chairs. There are shouts coming from both sides and the crash of furniture. They attempt to arrest someone but lose him in the ensuing scuffle. They retreat back towards the door and grab someone else at random. There is another struggle with batons waving viciously—one baton bangs off a cast-iron lightshade hanging by a chain from the ceiling which starts swinging out of control, throwing sudden, disoriented shadows. They suddenly regain possession of their victim and charge back down the stairs. 'Sláinte'? Maybe there is a connection, I don't know.



Kukuck festival

Protection

A blistering Saturday in May. It is a public festivity, the day of the Allied Military Parade. The usual ranks of police watch the assembled crowds carefully. They will not show the coils of barbed wire in Tiergarten on the evening news—just the rows of applauding dignitaries. The commander of the the British sector has banned the raising of placards and the distributing of leaflets in the vicinity of the parade. Nevertheless, a few small, typed slips of paper manage to circulate among the crowd with messages such as 'A celebration of militarism is an advertisement for the next war'. A squadron of US tanks has, painted on the barrel of each gun, the name of a different area of the city. A middle aged drunk starts shouting about 1941 during the French march-past. The police ignore him. Someone asks an old woman why she is clapping when the Americans pass; she says: 'I lost everything during the last two world wars and they are protecting me.'



USAF Tempelhof—protesting against war





INTERNAL PROBLEMS AND RESISTANCE

But the movement had to face internal problems as well.

For a long time the question whether to negotiate or not was a central and really divisive issue. The negotiators, who were in the majority, maintained that negotiating was the only possible way to retain the 'free space' that had been won in 1981. The non-negotiators maintained that the movement should hold to its original position not to negotiate as long as people were in prison, that to do otherwise would be a sell-out and that there was very little to be gained by negotiating anyway.

To a certain extent both points of view have been verified by events. Only the houses which negotiated have held onto their 'free space', but on the other hand, up until now only 55 houses have got contracts. At times the discussion between the negotiators and the non-negotiators developed into a vicious verbal war, the negotiators being accused of being opportunist and they in turn accusing the non-negotiators of being not able to get it together to negotiate, which only served to weaken the movement from within.

The root cause of this was the different reasons why the different groups squatted the houses in the first place. In 1981, when the movement was on the offensive these differences were unimportant, but immediately it moved into the defensive and a hopeless state of siege developed they came to the fore. Now, of course they are no longer important.

Militant confrontation with the police, which was part and parcel of the squatting movement in 1981/82 is now a thing of the past. The last riots in Berlin which were squatter related took place in June this year when the *Turm* (tower), a politically active non-negotiating house in Kreuzberg which had a *Kindergarten* and a women's cinema, was evicted along with the



Kukuck festival

Respectability

Breakfast outside on the pavement on a Sunday morning. Despite the fact that no one seems to have any money the table is loaded with different cheeses, cold meats, rolls, coffee; someone produces a bottle of champagne. The sort of people who don't drag their furniture into the street to have a meal pass by with disapproving expressions on their faces. To challenge 'respectability' in Germany is a political act, putting in to practice the old hippy ideal (there are punks sitting around the table as well, though) of the total integration of politics and enjoyment but in a darker time.

Dreams of unease

Open Day at Tempelhof USAF Base; hamburgers; beer; planes; tanks. Children play in and out of jeeps and armoured cars watched by indulgent parents. There is a parachute display and a woman's voice informs us over the PA that the United States Military Airlift Command is ready at a moment's notice to transport men and equipment to any part of the world where democracy is threatened. Two women manage to smuggle in a large anti-war banner which they unfurl in front of a French tank. A couple of confused-looking French soldiers attempt to grab the banner. Two American security men arrive and hold the women there. Waiting for the Berlin police to arrive an argument ensues with a respectable middle aged German couple. Why don't you go and try that in the East, they shout at the women, see how free it is there. They'd arrest you on the spot if you tried that there, the couple sneer. At that moment the Berlin police arrive and arrest the women on the spot.

Debris

An open air festival on a rubble filled building site. Despite the unlikely surroundings it is a roaring success, still going strong at four in the morning. Bands play, people eat and drink, an old horror film is shown with the gable-end of a house as a screen; it is as if the piles of wood, bricks and earth had suddenly become a suitable place to live, as if a new, resilient life form had suddenly appeared like weeds sprouting from the cracks in the paving. Children play happily in the debris.

Saturday June 18 1983

A fifteen thousand strong march to Kreuzberg against the resurgence of a foreigner/squatter/left hate-campaign which is being spearheaded by a dubious group calling themselves *Konservative Aktion*. The attempt by police to arrest two Turks for putting up a banner on a bridge sparks off a street battle which lasts well into the night. The area becomes a confused, slightly surrealist film set, littered with stones, where the smoke from the burning barricades and the stinging clouds of teargas float eerily down the warm streets. The police vans drive around, seemingly at random, screeching to a halt suddenly for baton charges, arrests. There is no such thing as an innocent bystander. It is strange, coming from Ireland, to meet this kind of 'policing', but no doubt someone from Belfast or Derry would shrug their shoulders, asking what's so special?

The enchanted isle. Enchanted? Yes, in a way. In the sense of frozen, trapped by a spell cast nearly forty years ago, in a different world. And both ends of the polarity that is West Berlin are caught in that larger polarity, the New Cold War or whatever you want to call it. The 'Economic Miracle' is over, and anything similar is unlikely to appear in the near future. Nevertheless, the *Kurfürstendamm* is still thronged with prosperous crowds, expensive cafés, luxurious department stores; but that universe is gradually disintegrating slowly as Germany looks at newsworld of riots, punks, anarchic politics, and doesn't understand; in terms of Berlin, neither side can really 'win' because ultimately the city is expendable, and it won't matter how many American flags are waved at how many military parades. When enough people realise this, the spell will be broken, the enchanted isle will become.....disenchanted. No doubt a war would do this, but one hopes that that will not be necessary. There is also the danger of a rebirth of facism on a large scale, but one hopes that the resistance this time around will be too strong. Some dreams of unease? The enchanted isle? Oh yes, all of that and more; but the beer is cheap and the buses run all night.

Martin Griffin

From Ekomedia's Squatting in West Berlin

THE STATE'S REVENGE



Willibaldalexis/Heimstraße houses. In the subsequent fighting, which lasted several hours, barricades were built and the police used teargas and made 33 arrests.

On July 18th Berlin saw its fiercest street fighting this year. A small fascist group calling itself *Konservative Action* decided to march into inner Kreuzberg to give the Turks there flowers and ask them 'politely' to get out of Germany. The fighting started in the afternoon at the end of a 15,000 counter-demonstration when the police arrested some people who wanted to put up an anti-fascist banner on the local *U-Bahn* station and lasted well into the night. It took hours of tear-gassing, baton charges and mass arrests (over 200) before the police could regain 'control'. However, this rioting was not directly squatter related.

The fantasy and *Power of '81* no longer exists. It declined slowly. *Kulturschock*, a series of cultural political events in late 1982, was an attempt to revitalise this aspect of the movement. As too were the tent villages set up on public squares during the summer of 1983. There were three of these. One, christened *Chaotenburg*, was set up in the district of Charlottenburg after

THE PRESENT WAVE of criminal charges being brought against peace demonstrators is being followed closely by the media, but the crusade launched by the Berlin Public Prosecutor's Office against ex-squatters barely gets a mention in the press. Squatting is 'out'; last November the last of the houses had been either evicted or legalised and *Innensenator* Lummer could declare that "this dark chapter in the history of the city" was closed. However, the Political Department of the Public Prosecutor's Office in Moabit is still very active. Approximately 1,000 people whom the police have arrested in squatted houses are being charged with *Hausfriedensbruch* (literally meaning: breach of the peace of a house/closest equivalent in English law would be 'criminal trespass') often in conjunction with 'resisting the police in the course of their duty', or theft of electricity, gas and water. The first sentences have already been passed.

When Chamisplatz 3 was occupied in September 1980 and evicted shortly afterwards, the twelve people involved were charged with *Hausfriedensbruch*, but during the subsequent hearing in February 1981, the Public Prosecutor's Office, under instructions from the *Justizsenator*, withdrew the charges.

Charges of *Hausfriedensbruch* brought against squatters never led to convictions during the last few months of the Social Democratic-Liberal city government. At that time, official Senate policy, the 'Berlin Line', involved differentiating between 'peaceful' and 'violent' squatters. Even the head of the Public Prosecutor's Political Department emphasised that they had nothing against *Instandbestzer* (literally meaning: 'renovating squatters'/a word used by the squatters in a general sense, but often used by the authorities to differentiate between good hard-working peaceful squatters and mere *Besetzer*) only against violent criminals, against whom they intended to proceed with all 'severity'. This strategy—draconian sentences for alleged stone throwers, mild sentences for the 'peaceful majority'—also reflected public opinion at the time. Due to the growing housing problem, the massive number of empty apartments and the scandalous practices of a widespread building mafia, large sections of the public accepted the legitimacy of squatting. And the politicians and lawyers were forced to admit that it was the squatting and mass trespass which had brought this situation to the notice of the public.

Some jurists even went so far as to say that the 'peace' of an empty house could not be 'breached'. Erich Küchenhoff, the well known criminal law expert at the University of Münster, was saying that an empty house had no 'peace' which could be breached. "By not fulfilling the social duty that the right to property entails," he declared, "the owner of a house deliberately left empty forfeits the protection of the criminal law". Several judges in West Germany dismissed charges of *Hausfriedensbruch* against squatters on these very grounds. One judge in Lower Saxony found in the case of house which was waiting to be demolished that the squatters could not have infringed on the owners rights and dismissed the case. These judicial speculations never became precedents, but they did indicate a political climate in which the squatting movement was treated with some respect.

In Berlin, the Public Prosecutor's Office only acquiesced to the official Senate policy of restraint after considerable pressure. But when, early in 1981, the Christian Democrats took over the city government, that policy changed. And from then on the instruments

for dealing with the squatters were to be demolition balls and the batons of the police. It was then too that the 'movement' began to decline and the hard line of the Political Department reemerged.

On September 22 of that year, *Innensenator* Lummer had eight houses evicted. In the Knobelsdorfer Straße in Charlottenburg the police noted the names and addresses of the 180 people they detained during the operation, and the Public Prosecutor's Office brought charges of *Hausfriedensbruch* against eight of them. The justification given for picking out these eight was that "the accused must be seen as habitual offenders". In other words, they had already had their names and addresses taken by the police during raids on other houses.

In other cases, people were prosecuted as 'habitual offenders' because the police had found them several times in the same house during repeated raids. The use of the term 'habitual' was obviously purely arbitrary. Thus, because of the high number of raids and identity checks that were carried out by the police, it was possible to charge large numbers of squatters with *Hausfriedensbruch*, even though official Senate policy was still that in simple cases of *Hausfriedensbruch* no charges would be brought.



Demo teargassed, Saturday June 18 1983

On May 8 1983 a police patrol reported the occupation of a house in Spandau. The house was due to be demolished. Four policemen entered the building, found the stairs to the loft barricaded and eventually let themselves in through a hole in the roof. The squatters they found in the attic, were, according to their own official statements "peaceful" and the officers were certain "they presented no threat of danger to them".

The 13 women and men allowed themselves to be detained and have their identities checked without offering any resistance. Their action, which the police also saw as symbolic, lasted about half an hour. The Public Prosecutor's Office informed the owner of the building of his right to bring charges of *Hausfriedensbruch*, but the owner wasn't interested in doing so. But in August of that year, Public Prosecutor Dohms had the arresting officers interviewed again. This time he was interested in the barricades, and after the interviews, had the squatters charged with 'resisting police officers in the course of their duty'. The court subsequently found them guilty and they were sentenced to between 20 and 40 days, or pay a fine equalling DM 10 a day. This was a relatively new development.

several houses and 200 squatters were evicted there. The other two were in Kreuzberg, one after the eviction of the Willibaldalexis/Heimstraße houses, and one after the *Besetzereck* was evicted during the *Konservative Action* riots.

The summer of 1983 was also marked by anti-militarist actions; the most recent of these was the blocking of the border-crossing point Check Point Charlie after the result of *Bundestag* (Federal German Parliament) debate on Pershing and Cruise was announced. These actions were not exclusive squatter actions but a lot of squatters initiated and took part in them. Squatter involvement in the larger peace movement has been negligible. In general, squatters and ex-

squatters have steadily become less and less visible as squatters, but many of them have become involved in other areas of political and cultural activity.

According to the *Ermittlungsausschuß* (legal support group) about 14 people are still in jail on squatter related offences. It is hard to judge exactly how much support the people in jail got from the movement. Sometimes it was very good, but sometimes people were not even visited. In 1982 a Christmas parcel action was organised through the *Ermittlungsausschuß*. This action was not directly squatter related but it was initiated by the same end of the political spectrum. This year it was not repeated—a sad comment on the general state of the movement. Part of the failure of the squatting movement with regard to the prisoners can be explained, though not excused, by its extremely loose and sometimes non-existent structures, which did not facilitate the regular and long term commitment prison work entails.

Heading into 1984 the movement is dead and safely in its grave, though no doubt its ghost will continue to haunt West Berlin for some time to come. But also certain, is that the outburst of revolutionary energy which, at its high point in 1981, the movement really was, will also come again, though how and when and in what form this will occur is impossible to predict.

Frank Jackson, January 1984
Kukuck, Anhalterstraße. From
Ecomedia's Squatting in West
Berlin



Innensenator Lummer dressed up
as Napoleon



Demo against Konservative Action in Kreuzberg

Now, while the charge of *Hausfriedensbruch* can only be brought on application from the house owner, the charge of 'resisting police officers in the course of their duty', can be brought by the Public Prosecutor's Office alone. Thus, this charge gives them full freedom of action in cases in which the owners have no interest in prosecution . . . and it is a legal concept which can be interpreted very broadly!

In fact, it is interpreted in such a manner that it can, in the majority of cases, be used against most squatters. Because, as in the above example, there does not have to be any active or physical resistance to the police, it is enough if the police are merely hindered in some way while in the act of entering a house.

Barricades, many of them purely symbolic, were erected in many of the houses which were evicted. And now the Public Prosecutor's Office is using this pretext to bring charges against more and more squatters.

To have held out for a long time in a house which was due to be demolished the people must have really wanted to live and to work there, and were thus totally dependent on supplies of electricity, gas and water. When the police searched a house in the Eylauer Straße in Kreuzberg they found that the electricity and water supply had been illegally turned on. And subsequently, both water and electricity companies brought charges of theft against the squatters. Later, the squatters began negotiations with them in order to get legal supplies and paid the outstanding water bill—whereupon, the complaints against them were withdrawn. But the Public Prosecutor's Office informed the water company that "the act of theft could not be invalidated by any later compensation". The court eventually fined the squatters between DM 500 and 1,000, the additional charge of *Hausfriedensbruch* becoming then a merely minor matter.

Similar prosecutions and sentences followed in other cases, and through the use of charges of theft, the squatters were shoved from the area of political criminality into that of normal criminality, no account being taken of their political motivation.

Thousands of ex-squatters are now facing charges similar to those listed above. And there has been a definite tendency for the severity of the sentences to increase. In the early days, fines equalling 20 days in prison were the rule, now fines equalling anything from 50 to 80 days in prison are not exceptional. And in cases of 'resisting the police in the course of their duty' suspended sentences of up to nine months have been passed.

And it's not a case of passing exemplary sentences in order to deter others—it is more a case of the stage revenging itself on a movement which dared to question its rules, particularly its most sacred rule: the law guaranteeing the right to private ownership of property. The understanding once expressed, under political pressure it must be admitted, for the laudable motives of the squatters has disappeared. And just as the broad interpretation of the laws against 'intimidation' and 'duress' has led to the convictions of large numbers of peace demonstrators, so too has the Berlin Public Prosecutor's Office made the criminal law into a weapon to criminalise mass civil disobedience. The victory of 'law and order' over a movement which understood democracy and politics to be something more than just voting every few years has become perfect. And once again we are shown who has power and who has not.

Already in 1981, Uwe Wesel, the Berlin criminal law professor, was describing the behavior of the Public Prosecutor's Office as a "war waged by the judiciary against the young generation". And with the *Alternative Liste*, he went on to demand an amnesty for squatters. As a precedent, he cited the amnesty granted to 5,000 student activists about ten years earlier by a previous Social Democratic-Liberal coalition.

A motion calling for such an amnesty in the Senate in 1981 was defeated, and in August of that year *Innensenator* Lummer announced that as long as the "squatter problem" had not been solved, any such discussion was a waste of time.

Since then, "the problem has been solved" and the much complained about "spaces outside the law" have ceased to exist. And there is no longer any mention of an amnesty—except in the election manifesto of the *Alternative Liste*. Müller, the head of the Political Department, passes the buck back to the Senate—he himself, only doing his duty as laid down by the Senate. His superior, Oxford, the *Justizsenator*, says that it is a matter for the federal authorities in Bonn. Amnesties, he says, "can only be justified with regard to acts against the law which were committed at a time of general national emergency, the prosecution of which would be seen as unjust at a later date", and that no such emergency situation existed with regard to squatting.

So, the since the housing shortage caused by speculation and empty apartments was not an emergency, those who protested against it could only be criminals.

Arnim Stauch
From Die Tageszeitung (4 January 1985)

in place of a concluding chapter we are pleased to offer a brief news bulletin:

on the Stadtautobahn police are attempting to clear a lane blocked

by a saxophone; reports are coming in of clouds

of 50 Mark notes drifting past the Senate for Internal affairs;

in Kreuzberg today the wall sealing off the borough from the rest of Berlin (West)

was opened by the killer of Olaf Palme who works mornings

in the police headquarters and afternoons in an alternative project;

come and visit! visit the ausländerpolizei

the arbeitsamt the finanzamt the socialamt the schnellvermittler checkpointcharlie

come and visit THE EAST!!!! (and spot the difference)

and other places of interest, said the Mayor in a statement today

at the opening of the new torture chambers at the Cultural Centre.

the news that 4 out of every 422 demonstrators suffer from toothache at the time of the baton-charge

was greeted by the Senator for work and social Affairs as a further proof of the security forces' success in countering subversion;

the u.s. military press officer announced today that new measures are being put into operation to prevent terrorist attacks

which means that from now on libyan diplomats will not be permitted to purchase wine gums at the px stores.

and me? i am just a voice on the radio it is no longer warm enough here to lie out on the soft concrete

the studio is heated however and quite sensual this is the end of the bulletin.

martin griffin

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Kraftfahrer! Zugang zu den Grundstücken Lauscherdamm 15 bis 25 Zugang zu den Grundstücken Lauscherdamm 1 bis 13 Berthastraße 61 über Grundstück Adolfsstraße 64

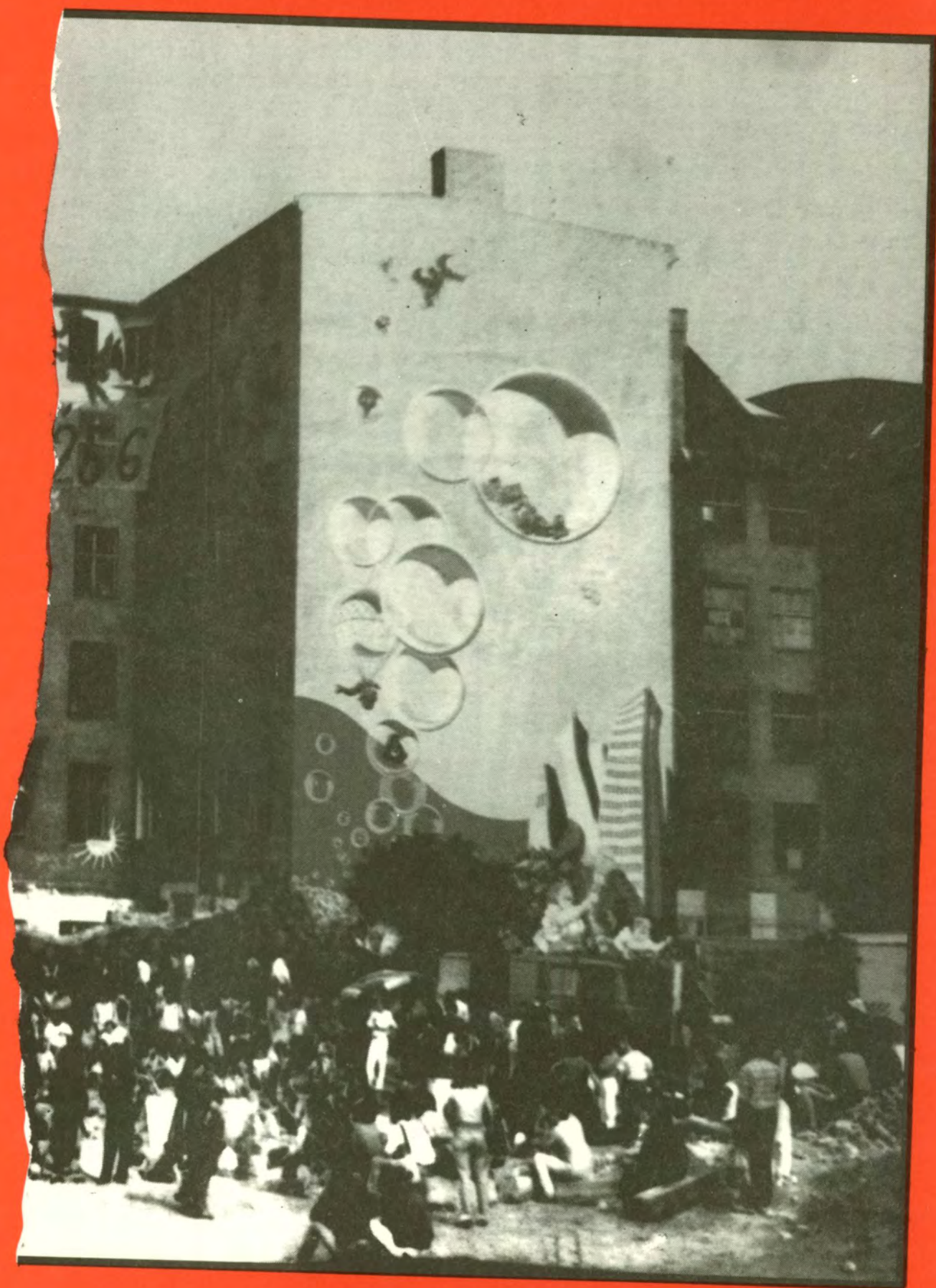


Linda O'Riordan



Mike Hughes

Above: the Kukuck in July 1985. After the eviction the murals were painted over.
Below: a second world war bunker which was just opposite the Kukuck. The graffiti: ANYONE WHO BUILDS BUNKERS DROPS BOMBS and the sign says ROOMS TO LET



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